Illinois U Library

A Quarterly of New Literature

ACCENT

ROBERTS JACKSON:
Fly Away Home

JO SINCLAIR:
The Family

Essays on Wallace Stevens by
C. ROLAND WAGNER and RICHARD EBERHART

VERNON YOUNG: Trial by Water — Joseph Conrad

H. R. HAYS: A Whaling Print

W. S. MERWIN

ARTHUR GREGOR

SOL CHANELES

PHYLLIS HIRSHLEIFER

40 CENTS

SPRING 1952

COMBINATION OFFERS

The Green Huntsman and The Telegraph

The Lucien Leuwen novels by Stendhal.

$7.00 ..... With one year of Accent ($1.50): $6.50

New Directions 13

Prose and poetry by John Hawkes, A. M. Klein, Jean Paulhan, Tennessee Williams, Celine, Jammes, Maude Hutchins, Kenneth Rexroth, Niccolo Tucci, Jack Jones, etc.

$5.00 ..... With one year of Accent ($1.50): $5.25

The Structure of Complex Words

by William Empson.

$5.00 ..... With one year of Accent ($1.50): $5.25

Accent Anthology

A 687-page selection from the first five years (1940-1945), containing otherwise unavailable work by Katherine Anne Porter, R. P. Blackmur, Henry Miller, Cleanth Brooks, Eudora Welty, Delmore Schwartz, Otis Ferguson, Arthur Mizener, Kaye Boyle, Richard Eberhart, Jules Laforgue, David Daiches, etc.

$4.00 ..... With one year of Accent ($1.50): $4.25

The Poetry of Ezra Pound

by Hugh Kenner.

$4.00 ..... With one year of Accent ($1.50): $4.25

A selection from the New Directions 'New Classics' series:

Poems of Stephane Mallarme
ABC of Reading by Ezra Pound
Miss Lonelyhearts by Nathanael West
Under Western Eyes by Joseph Conrad (introduction by Zabel)
Paterson (Books I-IV) by William Carlos Williams

$1.50 ..... With one year of Accent ($1.50): $2.25

Send orders directly to
ACCENT, 102 University Station, Urbana, Illinois

CONTENTS

Vernon Young: *Trial by Water: Joseph Conrad's "The Nigger of the Narcissus"* ____ 67

Roberts Jackson: *Fly Away Home* ____ 82

Sol Chaneles: *Gabriella and the Lonely Horn* ____ 94

W. S. Merwin: *A Dance of Death* ____ 95

Phyllis Hirshleifer: *Lament* ____ 97
Poem ____ 97

Jo Sinclair: *The Family* ____ 98

H. R. Hays: *A Whaling Print* ____ 108
The Zulu ____ 109
According to the Chronicler ____ 110

C. Roland Wagner: *The Idea of Nothingness in Wallace Stevens* ____ 111

Richard Eberhart: *The Stevens Prose* (review of *The Necessary Angel* by Wallace Stevens) ____ 122

Arthur Gregor: *The New Poetry of Horace Gregory* (review of *Selected Poems* by Horace Gregory) ____ 125

EDITORIAL STAFF: Kerker Quinn, Charles Shattuck, George Scouffas, Allen Hayman, Walter Edens, Roberta Scouffas, Walter Stone, Sidney Warschausky, David Rudolph. Non-resident: Robert Bauer, Donald Hill, Carl Hartman. Secretarial assistants: Janet Bragg, Mary Kay Peer, Frances Conlin.

ACCENT: Box 102, University Station, Urbana, Illinois. Published quarterly under the auspices of the Department of English of the University of Illinois. Subscription: $1.50 a year, $2.50 for two years in the United States (elsewhere $1.75 a year, $2.75 for two years). Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelopes. Entered as second-class matter Sept. 26, 1940, at the post office at Urbana, Illinois, under the act of March 3, 1879. Copyright, 1952, by ACCENT.

CONTRIBUTORS

SOL CHANELES teaches at the Bentley School and is working toward a Ph.D. in communications research at New York University.

RICHARD EBERHART has published six volumes of poetry in the last two decades. He lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

ARTHUR GREGOR'S verse drama, *Fire!,* was awarded the Festival of Contemporary Arts play prize at the University of Illinois in 1952.

H. R. HAYS is the author of two novels, *Lie Down in Darkness* and *The Takers of the City,* as well as a widely published poet and translator.

PHYLLIS HIRSHLEIFER, of Chicago, has contributed an essay on Faulkner to *Perspective.*

ROBERTS JACKSON lives in New York City and is at work on a novel.

W. S. MERWIN'S first book of poems, in which "A Dance of Death" appears, is the 1952 volume in the Yale Series of Younger Poets.

JO SINCLAIR, author of the novels *Wasteland* and *Sing at My Wake,* lives in Novelty, Ohio.

C. ROLAND WAGNER lives in New York. His study of Stevens is an excerpt from a dissertation being written for the Yale University Department of Philosophy.

VERNON YOUNG, whose criticism of fiction and cinema has appeared in many American magazines, is on the staff of the *Arizona Quarterly.*

IN RECENT ISSUES

Winter 1951 — BERTOLT BRECHT: A Little Organum for the Theater . . . JOHN M. BRADBURY: Ransom as Poet . . . JOSEPH BENNETT: Armistice Day (story) . . . OLIVER SNYDER: A Note on 'Billy Budd' . . . JOSEPH WARREN BEACH: A New Study of Donne . . . Poems by SRINIVAS RAYAPROL, VIRGINIA BLISH, MORTON SEIF, DONALD JENKS, T. B. BRUMBAUGH.

Spring 1951 — W. Y. TINDALL: Dante and Mrs. Bloom . . . PARKER TYLER: The Film — Revival of the Matriarchic Spirit . . . Stories by PEGGY BENNETT and JACK STRICKLAND . . . Poems by LYSANDER KEMP, MASON JORDAN MASON, CECILY R. McNEIL, STEPHEN STEPANCHEV.

Summer 1951 — R. P. BLACKMUR: The Loose and Baggy Monsters of Henry James . . . ALWYN BERLAND: Allen Tate's Poetry . . . ARTHUR GREGOR: Continued Departure (play) . . . Stories by DANIEL CURLEY and JAMES SCHUYLER . . . Poems by LEONARD CASPER, GEORGE ANTHONY, FRANK O'HARA, BOBB DAVIS, DOROTHY KELSON.

Autumn 1951 — DONALD F. THEALL: Traditional Satire in Eliot's 'Coriolan' . . . RUDOLPH VON ABELE: 'The Scarlet Letter' — A Reading . . . WALLACE STEVENS: Madame La Fleurie . . . Stories by P. H. LOWREY and HARRISON PAUL PORTER . . . C. W. M. JOHNSON: Empson's Complex Words . . . Poems by BYRON VAZAKAS, HAROLD NORSE, JOSEPH LANGLAND, HAROLD V. WITT.

Winter 1952 — R. V. CASSILL: The Life of the Sleeping Beauty (story) . . . HOWARD GRIFFIN: A Dialogue with W. H. Auden (IV) . . . C. G. ANDERSON: A Study of Joyce's 'Portrait' . . . MARJORIE BRACE: Which Cures All Sorrow (story) . . . Poems by VERNON WATKINS, GENE MAGNER, MAY SWENSON, FREDERICK BOCK, VIRGINIA KIDD, LEONARD RANDOLPH.

Send 40c apiece (or $1.75 for the five) to ACCENT,
102 University Station, Urbana, Illinois.

ACCENT
A QUARTERLY OF NEW LITERATURE
Volume XII, Number 2 Spring, 1952

VERNON YOUNG:

Trial by Water

Joseph Conrad's "The Nigger of the Narcissus"

> "Both men and ships live in an unstable element, are subject to subtle and powerful influences, and want to have their merits understood rather than their faults found out."
> — Conrad: *The Mirror of the Sea*
>
> "I have no doubt that star-gazing is a fine occupation, for it leads you within the borders of the unattainable. But map-gazing, to which I became addicted so early, brings the problems of the great spaces of the earth into stimulating and direct contact with sane curiosity and gives an honest precision to one's imaginative faculty."
> — Conrad: "Geography and Some Explorers" in *Last Essays*

The Nigger of the Narcissus is the account of a sailing-ship's voyage from Bombay to London by the way of the Cape, during which the ship nearly founders with all hands and the crew is temporarily demoralized by the presence of a Negro seaman named James Wait. The Negro dies and is buried at sea; the *Narcissus* arrives in London with no further incident. *The Nigger of the Narcissus* is a study of character on trial, a memorial to seafarers

under sail, together with disclaimers of those who would have undermined the innocence and pertinacity of their toil. *The Nigger of the Narcissus* is an allegory of temptation and endurance, a microcosm of the moral world of relationships and responsibilities. And since, as in all myth, principles as well as patterns of action are reiterated across space and time, the social motif of *The Nigger of the Narcissus* is referable to the individual psyche, and the novel, under this aspect, is an adventure of the soul.

It is the third aspect, the mythic, never openly acknowledged by Conrad himself, which gives to the novel its vibratory temper and its perennial interest. Conrad's fraternal loyalty to the nautical facts of the case is finally subordinate to his transcendental theme, fortified throughout the novel by its equivalence in symbolic action. Geography and meteorology combine with crises of human conduct and with analogues of the metaphysical cycle to produce a rich complex of correspondences.

The *Narcissus,* then, sails from Bombay to London — which is to say, from the East (source, for Conrad, of the exotic and the ominous) to the capital of the mercantile West. The voyage, a routine "homeward passage," necessitates the traversal of 60° southward to attain 20° northward; to reach home port, the *Narcissus* must sail away from it, so to speak, down miles of longitude against the West Wind Drift and around the cape of storms called Good Hope, before she can straighten north and sail directly home with assisting trade winds. The crucial calamity — the deadly plunge of the ship on to her *port* side (the left, or sinister, side) — and the termination of the power which may be said to have effected it, the death of the Nigger, occur equidistantly from the Zero Line (the equator of day and night), approximately 40° south and 40° north, respectively. Mercator's Projection thus becomes a corollary graph of the crew's spiritual ordeal.

Leaving one continent for another, the *Narcissus* sails *out of* darkness *into* darkness, since Conrad's moral geography was opposite in value to Herman Melville's, for example. The sea, "the unstable element," was, to Conrad, the amniotic ocean of life, itself: like life uncertain, incalculable but enchanting and worthier of men's challenge than the land. In all Conrad's novels, the land is the home of the enemy. The jungle, the forest, the city: these are his symbols of treachery. The sea, however disastrous or inclement it may become, is as neutral and as irrefutable as the life-cycle; it is the given,

if "destructive element,"[1] and in the face of it man's duty is, like Singleton's in this novel, to "steer with care."

Conrad's earliest fictional commitments to the antipodal character of land and sea are underlined in this novel. The land lies "within the frontier of infamy and filth, within that border of dirt and hunger, of misery and dissipation, that comes down on all sides to the water's edge of the incorruptible ocean . . ." The *Narcissus,* a creature of light, was born in darkness, "in black eddies of smoke, under a grey sky, on the banks of the Clyde. The clamorous and sombre stream gives birth to things of beauty that float away into the sunshine of the world to be loved by men." When she leaves Bombay with her yards hoisted she becomes "a high and lonely pyramid, gliding all shining and white, through the sunlit mist. The tug turned short round and went away towards the land [resembling] an enormous and aquatic black beetle, surprised by the light, overwhelmed by the sunshine, trying to escape with ineffectual effort into the distant gloom of the land . . ."[2] Upon arrival in the Thames at the end of the voyage, the *Narcissus* re-enters the cloud: "the shadows of soulless walls fell upon her, the dust of all the continents leaped upon her deck, and a swarm of strange men, clambering up her sides, took possession of her in the name of the sordid earth. She had ceased to live."

Wait, the Negro, originally a product of the jungle, one supposes — he is specifically alluded to as a West Indian, enforcing the equation of West and Death — is, with Donkin, "the independent offspring of the ignoble freedom of the slums full of disdain and hate for the austere servitude of the sea," set off against the Able Seaman, Singleton, who, in forty-five years, has lived no more than forty months ashore. The narrator's final reflection on the crew recapitulates this sheep-and-goats distinction. "I never saw them again . . . Singleton has no doubt taken with him the long record of his faithful work in

[1] This phrase from *Lord Jim* was radically misemployed by Stephen Spender (in *The Destructive Element,* 1935), following the lead of I. A. Richards, and criticism since has largely accepted the misinterpretation. To reread the passage closely in the knowledge of Conrad's Neptunian bias is to discover, with Crankshaw, that "the destructive element" equals, not the chaos of experience, and a "state of complete unbelief" (Spender), but rather the normative and traditional element of being. "The way is to the destructive element submit yourself . . . If [a man] tries to climb out into the air . . . he drowns." In this figure, the *air* should be the destructive element by Spender's interpretation!

[2] The antithesis here is unquestionably a sidelong glance at the Egyptian figure of the pyramid, prime-symbol of direction and sun-worship, and of the scarab, symbol of creative energy.

to the peaceful depths of an hospitable sea. And Donkin, who never did a decent day's work in his life, no doubt earns his living by discoursing with filthy eloquence upon the right of labor to live. So be it! Let the earth and the sea each have its own."

By not accepting the moral dichotomy of land and sea as a highly charged metaphor, the reader of *The Nigger of the Narcissus* might well accuse Conrad of sentimental sophistry; accepting it, he will be in a position to appreciate how effectively it is co-featured with the other symbolic properties — particularly with the permeating use of color contrasts. White and black, pink or blue and black, light and shade, sun and cloud, gold and darkness — within the total form, these oppositions are vitally operative, usually accompanied by relative variations of weather. So much is this tonality the index to Conrad's alignment of moods and forces that its most pertinent appearances are well worth isolating before taking up considerations less purely visual.

* *

Among other possible reasons for preferring the finally established title to earlier ones (among which were *The Forecastle: A Tale of Ships and Men* and *Children of the Sea: A Tale of the Forecastle),* Conrad surely felt the force of the black and white dualism, while taking advantage, perhaps, of the British association of narcissus with death, thereby giving a paradoxical twist to the pairing of skull and blossom, root and flower.[3] In any case, the title indubitably sets the key which is sounded in the very first sentence:

> Mr. Baker, chief mate of the ship *Narcissus,* stepped in one stride out of his lighted cabin into the darkness of the quarterdeck.

When the Negro, Wait, joins the ship,

> He held his head up in the glare of the lamp — a head vigorously modelled into deep shadows and shining lights . . .

After he retires, groaning, to his bunk in the forecastle,

[3] The fact of there having been an actual ship, *Narcissus,* and an actual Wait in Conrad's seafaring experience is of course less important than his retention of the facts he could artistically transmute. The possible bearing of the old *Narcissus* legend I but hesitantly advance. The sea certainly *reflects* the collective moral features of the crew: ". . . the sea knew all, and would in time infallibly unveil to each the wisdom hidden in all the errors, the certitude that lurks in doubts." This mirror tests the vanity of all aboard, but I have no wish to urge the image beyond reasonable evidence for its fitness; notoriously, symbols have a life of their own.

> Singleton stood at the door with his face to the light and his back to the darkness.

(This vignette, sharpening here the presence of Wait, reverberates long after in one of the most remarkable sentences in the book when, at the end of the voyage, the older man steps up to the shipping-office pay table:

> Singleton came up, venerable — and uncertain as to daylight; . . . his hands, that never hesitated in the great light of the open sea, could hardly find the small pile of gold in the profound darkness of the shore.)

During the voyage, every climax of weather as well as every dramatic position in which Wait figures is similarly balanced. Emerging from the forecastle, Wait

> seemed to hasten the retreat of departing light by his very presence; the setting sun dipped sharply, as though fleeing before our nigger . . .

As the men struggle to extricate Wait from behind the bulkhead while the ship is capsizing,

> in the sunshiny blue square of the door, the boatswain's face, bearded and dark, Wamibo's face, wild and pale, hung over — watching . . .

As they are crossing the equator, when the influence of Wait has settled into its most oppressive effects,

> The invisible sun, sweeping above the upright masts, made on the clouds a blurred stain of rayless light, and a similar patch of faded radiance kept pace with it from east to west over the unglittering level of the waters. At night, through the impenetrable darkness of earth and heaven, broad sheets of flame waved noiselessly; and for half a second the becalmed craft stood out with its masts and rigging, with every sail and every rope distinct and black in the centre of a fiery outburst, like a charred ship enclosed in a globe of fire.

(The ship on the line of the equator and the square-rigging against the sky form a monogram of a fiery cross.) Concurrent with the dead calm after land is first sighted, Wait, attended by Donkin, lies dying in the deckhouse. His last words are

> "Light . . . the lamp . . . and . . . go."

Donkin, after stealing Wait's money is

> . . . just in time to see Wait's eyes blaze up and go out at once, like two lamps overturned together by a sweeping blow . . . [Outside] sleeping men, huddled under jackets, made on the lighted deck shapeless dark mounds that had the appearance of neglected graves . . . The ship slept. And the immortal sea stretched away, immense and hazy, like the image of life, with a glittering surface and lightless depths.

The coda that follows the marine burial of Wait is brisk and lambent; the prose throws off saltatory images of light which conquer those of darkness (and which, incidentally, involve an energetic sequence of "pathetic fallacy"):

> . . . the clouds swifter than the ship, more free, but without a home. The coast to welcome her stepped out of space into the sunshine. The lofty headlands trod masterfully into the sea; the wide bays smiled in the light . . . At night the headlands retreated, the bays advanced into one unbroken line of gloom. The lights of earth mingled with the lights of heaven; and above the tossing lanterns of a trawling fleet a great lighthouse shone steadily, like an enormous riding light burning above a vessel of fabulous dimensions.

The *Narcissus* is berthed and her men are "scattered by the dissolving contact with land." The narrator last sees them, their pockets full of money,

> swaying irresolute and noisy on the broad flagstones before the Mint. They were bound for the Black Horse, where men, in fur caps with brutal faces and in shirt sleeves, dispense out of varnished barrels the illusions of strength . . .

A concluding ambience balances the earliest view of the men as they had mustered on deck in Bombay:

> The dark knot of seamen drifted in sunshine . . . The sunshine of heaven fell like a gift of grace on the mud of the earth, on the remembering and mute stones, on greed, selfishness . . . And to the right of the dark group the stained front of the Mint, cleansed by the flood of light, stood out for a moment dazzling and white like a marble palace in a fairy tale. The crew of the *Narcissus* drifted out of sight.

The reader will discover for himself many more such images than I have thought necessary to display here: these are perhaps sufficient to verify Conrad's purposive employment of them. It will have been seen that although these dark-and-light oppositions mainly express conventional connotations of death and life, evil and good (land and sea, left and right), there are moments when they represent no such clear antinomy. White hail streaming from a black cloud, the dark boatswain against the bright blue door, a "withered" moon, and others, are clearly not intended to be consistent with the moral polarities conveyed by the general thematic continuity; they are simply part of an absorption in tonal antithesis. In the superb sentence of the gold in the darkness of the shore, gold and darkness are not opposed but correlated, morally speaking — as they are again in that extraordinary touch of the men going from the light-flooded Mint to the Black Horse. This oblique manipulation of symbols may be better appreciated in the light of a statement on cinematic art, which, as Edward Crankshaw was first among critics to point out, Conrad's art so often resembled. Writing on the subject of cinematic color values, Sergei Eisenstein declared, in *The Film Sense:*

> In art it is not the *absolute* relationships that are decisive, but those *arbitrary* relationships within a system of images dictated by the particular work of art. . . . the *emotional intelligibility* and function of color will rise from the natural order of establishing *the color imagery of the work, coincidental with the process of shaping the living movement of the whole work.*

* * *

In *The Nigger of the Narcissus,* what Conrad's imagery substantiates above all is the apocalyptic nature of the novel's outline. The four Empedoclean elements, the polar variants of night and day, hell and heaven, West and East, encompass the cosmological pyramid which is the subject. In "the living movement of the whole," Conrad's symbolism subscribes to no single order of religious values; it synthesizes universally recurring emblems in man's expression of his destiny and places them at the service of the novel's contingent subject, the moral effects of illusion.

> The true peace of God begins at any spot a thousand miles from the nearest land; and when he sends there the messengers of his might it is not in terrible wrath against crime, presumption and folly, but paternally, to chasten simple hearts — ignorant hearts that know nothing of life, and beat undisturbed by envy or greed.

An exaggerated reassertion of oceanic felicity, this paragraph is also the nuclear designation of the *Narcissus'* voyage as a trial by water, not so much to initiate as to chasten, to test the illusion of invulnerability which each man wears in varying proportion. The primary agent of this trial is the Nigger, James Wait. "I belong to the ship," is his calm announcement to the chief mate as he stands muster. In the occult vocabulary he would be described as an *elemental,* a servant of the general law of nature; from the psychological bias, he is an embodiment of the subconscious, instinctual but regressive quality in man. Twentieth-century anthropology, to say nothing of sociology, has perhaps diminished, if not discredited, for most of us, the spell of the lurid, the mysterious or the evil in the person of the Negro, but it would be a mistake to see in James Wait only an exercise of Conradian chauvinism. Conrad's experience with African back-country savages certainly justified his using the type as illustrative of the black-magical and the unevolved. When describing Wait's face as "pathetic and brutal: the tragic, the mysterious, the repulsive mask of a nigger's soul," he was enjoying the privilege, apparently inevitable to their psychology, which the white races have taken upon themselves, of seeing the dark races as either exotic or sinister, but in any case inferior.

Metaphysically, Wait serves a purpose comparable to that of El Negro in Melville's "Benito Cereno": he is the *spirit* of blackness, archetype of the unknown forces from the depths. With this important difference, however: he is not sensationally demonic but, rather, insidious and emanating. His role is a rehearsal, in Conrad's literature, of that "barbarous and superb woman" in "Heart of Darkness" who, as the steamboat leaves with the damned and moribund remains of Kurtz, stretches "tragically her bare arms after [them] over the sombre and glittering river." Wait, by a form of adjuration less explicit, more accessible to the gullibility of simple men, all but deprives the crew of their will to live. Consentient with the natural perils that haunt its progress, he accompanies the *Narcissus* across the waters of strife, casting his spell on the probity of the crew's endeavors.

A symbol of postponement, his name is cardinal token: Wait. Conrad plays upon it when the Nigger belatedly joins the ship, shouting "Wait" to the astonished officer who takes the word as an insolent injunction rather than as a name. Wait's burial at sea re-emphasizes the tenacity of his inertia, for when the plank is first raised to slide his body overboard, he holds fast until one of the sailors, after scream-

ing "Jimmy, be a man! . . . Go, Jimmy . . . ," gives the corpse needed impetus with a light push.[4] But *Wait* has also, by virtue of the Nigger's retarding and oppressive action, the force of the other spelling, *weight*. (Immediately following his plummet from the deck, "The ship rolled as if relieved of an unfair burden.") From his bed-ridden vantage point, supine and seemingly helpless, he drags on the initial resistance of the men like an anchor, beguiles their sympathy, gradually vitiates their resolution by the pathos of his induced condition. (Naturalistically, his eventual death may be construed as psychogenic.) His appeal is to the slacker in each man's heart, awakening the desire to rebel, abandonment of duty and the luxury of irresponsible rest.

The near undoing of the crew is the result of their returning good for evil, a practice which, in extremity, was to Conrad a sin of pride. As he wrote in a letter to Marguerite Poradowska,

> . . . to return good for evil is not only profoundly immoral but dangerous, in that it sharpens the appetite for evil in the malevolent and develops (perhaps unconsciously) that latent tendency towards hypocrisy in the . . . let us say, benevolent.

Similarly to Lingard in Conrad's Almayer novels, the crew of the *Narcissus* become victims of benevolent egotism, and their sponsorship, like Lingard's, is betrayed. Wait meets their compassion with abuse; he flaunts his death-urge before their living eyes.

> He fascinated us. He would never let doubt die. He overshadowed the ship. Invulnerable in his promise of speedy corruption he trampled on our self-respect, he demonstrated to us daily our want of moral courage; he tainted our lives.

The determining incident of their slavery occurs when they rescue Wait from the deck-house in which he is trapped by the storm; though he insults them for their pains, they are more than ever in his power. They come to exemplify the negative hazard involved in the young Lingard's Oriental sentiment that "When you save people from death you take a share in their life."

In the oblique hours of rescue, they have been on a very long journey toward oblivion.

---

[4] Conrad later discloses that the boatswain had forgotten to grease the plank and that the carpenter had left a protruding nail — a somewhat vulgar irony, one must admit, to safeguard his fear of wholesale commitment to the irrational.

> The return on the poop was like the return of wanderers after many years amongst people marked by the desolation of time.[5]

They have undergone the first trial, entered the dominion of death and been reborn; the salvage of Wait effects a respite, a temporary release from danger, in the manner of the old tales in which an ogre was freed from a cave, a witch from an oak-tree or an imp from a bottle. Freedom is gained only by entering into closer bondage with the genie.[6] The weather clears, the sea is calmed.

> . . . from that time our life seemed to start afresh as though we had died and had been resuscitated. All the first part of the voyage, the Indian Ocean on the other side of the Cape, all that was lost in a haze, like an ineradicable suspicion of some previous existence.

The more extreme test is to follow. Their solidarity with the defecting Negro established by their plucking him to safety, the crew members arise to articulate discontent when Wait finally offers to turn to with the men and his services are refused by Captain Allistoun, who is privately convinced that the Nigger is indeed going to die. The fatally deluded allegiance of the men will not let them believe this. No longer able to distinguish the smell of mortality, they offer their disbelief to Wait as a propitiation, as if he were the totem, the cult-object of a primitive clan. "The desolation of time" has obliterated their etiological powers and returned them to the rudimentary form of communal belief through contagion (for which Emil Durkheim has provided the term *surexcitation*).

As it becomes unmistakably evident that Wait will die and his "fleshless head" resembles "a disinterred black skull," disbelief changes to anxiety. And, as Singleton has predicted, Wait dies after land is sighted; the reaction is one of sullen surprise.

> We did not know till then how much faith we had put in his delusions. We had taken his chances of life so much at his own

[5] Note the similarity of Donkin's return from his nocturnal vigil with the dying Nigger: ". . . as though he had expected to find the men dead, familiar things gone for ever: as though, like a wanderer returning after many years, he had expected to see bewildering changes."

[6] In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Pantheon-Bollingen, 1949, pp. 69 ff.), Joseph Campbell discusses the role of the supernatural helper in the monomyth. This helper, often a guide or supporter, may be dangerous, "the lurer of the innocent soul into realms of trial," sometimes signifying "the inscrutability of the guide that we are following, to the peril of all our rational ends."

> valuation that his death, like the death of an old belief, shook the foundations of our society. A common bond was gone; the strong, effective and respectable bond of a sentimental lie.

Wait is stitched into a canvas and dropped overboard into the "lightless depths" — to starboard, toward the East, the night, the land, and the direction of rebirth.

* * * *

The men of the *Narcissus* are modified by James Wait in accord with the drift of their respective temperaments. The trial by water corroborates either the virtue or the ignoble fallacy of their necessary illusions. Captain Allistoun is never for a moment intimidated by Jimmy's malingering. He it is who keeps his head when the *Narcissus* heels and the carpenter, in a panic, grabs an ax with which to cut the masts free. Allistoun forbids the action, thereby saving all hands. While the half-drowned men cling to the canted deck, waiting for death, he remains on the poop, eyes ahead for the first opportunity to shout "wear ship." (On the analogy of the psychic organism, Allistoun is the *super-ego,* dominating consciously the subterranean murmurs of defeat. His insistence that Wait remain in his cabin is a further act of will over the emerging death-wish; he refuses it the light of day.) The last order he gives to the officer on leaving the ship summarizes his supreme rationality: "Don't forget to wind up the chronometers tomorrow morning."

Singleton, in less authoritative measure, is the Captain's moral counterpart in the forecastle. A singleton is an independent card in a suit; whether or not Conrad chose this association, the name is, in any case, a reflection of the sailor's forthright characteristic: single tone.

> Singleton lived untouched by human emotions. Taciturn and unsmiling, he breathed among us — in that alone resembling the rest of the crowd.

He is heavily tattooed and is first introduced as "the incarnation of barbarian wisdom serene in the blasphemous turmoil of the world." The simplicity of Singleton's candor is the exact countercheck to the simplicity of the Nigger's deceit: the sea and the jungle. Less than a week after leaving Bombay, Singleton meets the Negro's foul misanthropy with the disconcertingly direct question, "Are you dying?" During the Cape disaster he remains braced at the wheel and, in common with the others, derives from the experience its lesson for

his own identity. Charley, the youngest of the crew, is "subdued by the sudden disclosure of the insignificance of his youth"; "Singleton was possessed of sinister truth . . . the cook of fame —."

The "sinister truth" is Singleton's recognition of his mortality.

> Old! . . . like a man bound treacherously while he sleeps, he woke up fettered by the long chain of disregarded years.

His indifference to Wait's corruption is born not of rational understanding but of fearlessness bred from experience and from a simple set of convictions little different from belief in magic (white magic — he signs his name with a cross). Singleton and the cook, together, represent the veracity that sometimes lurks in inherited superstition. Singleton's naive science of cause and effect is certainly not refuted by the circumstance that Jimmy *does* die in sight of land and that wind *does* rise after his submersion.

Podmore, the religious fanatic, is scorned by the Captain and the embarrassed men alike, but he is, nonetheless, the cook — their nourisher. While they sprawl helplessly on the toppling ship, only Podmore has the imagination to sense their position in relation to eternity. After serving the men from the water-cask, he sits to leeward and shouts back to the men's congratulations,

> . . . but the seas were breaking in thunder just then, and we only caught snatches that sounded like: "Providence" and "born again."

Podmore braves the diluvial decks to reach the galley and incredibly makes coffee for the crew.

> Afterwards Archie declared that the thing was "meeraculous" . . . and we did our best to conceal our admiration under the wit of fine irony. The cook rebuked our levity, declaring himself, with solemn animation, to have been the object of a special mercy for the saving of our unholy lives . . .

While Wait slips toward death, the men's unbelief is reproved by Podmore's fatuous exaltation at the hope of saving the Negro's soul. He is momentarily inspired:

> He saw flowing garments, clean-shaved faces, a sea of light,— a lake of pitch. . . He had prayerfully divested himself of the last vestige of his humanity. He was a voice — a fleshless and sublime thing, as on that memorable night — the night when he went walking over the sea to make coffee for perishing sinners.

Enraptured and preposterous Podmore may be, but his certainty that the Nigger's soul is possessed by the Devil is closer to the spiritual nexus of experience than the callous nescience of men like Donkin. The crew members in general never do understand the moral meaning of James Wait. But the cool rationality of Allistoun, the intuitive wisdom of Singleton, and the overheated zeal of Podmore discover, behind the mask of a dying shirker, the infra-human visage of the Satanic.

Donkin, the Cockney, is the lowest common denominator, the eternal and omnipresent grumbler, a thing of rags and patches with no soul of his own. He feeds on other men's identities as he wears their cast-off clothes. At the beginning of the voyage, he appears in the forecastle, truculent, half-naked, squealing of his "rights."

> He knew how to conquer the naive instincts of that crowd. In a moment they gave him their compassion, jocularly, contemptuously, or surlily; and at first it took the shape of a blanket thrown at him as he stood there with the white skin of his limbs showing his human kinship through the black fantasy of his rags. Then a pair of old shoes fell at his muddy feet . . . The gust of their benevolence sent a wave of sentimental pity through their doubting hearts.

Donkin is a moral cadger, a robber of sentiment, an advance edition of the more subtle dereliction practiced by Wait, and he becomes the transmitter of Wait's metaphysical loafing. A fair-weather sailor, he is always the first to scream, to complain, to curse. "Venomous and thin-faced, he glared from the ample misfit of borrowed clothing as if looking for something he could smash." Alternately deriding and defending the Nigger, he is, appropriately enough, the only one present at his death, for it is fitting that Wait should vanish into darkness attended by his familiar spirit. Donkin discharges his futile hatred at the dying man, hurls a biscuit at him (the bread — the common bond) and steals his money (a subtle reversal of Singleton at the pay table: Donkin finds *his* "small pile of gold in the profound darkness of" the deckhouse). In this death watch, Donkin suffers the terror of absolute moral isolation. And the animus of Wait inhabits the unholy frame of Donkin to the last. In his final appearance, at the Board of Trade pay-office, *dressed in another suit of clothes,* he pronounces maledictions on the assembled crew who have declined to drink with him:

> "You won't drink? . . . No! . . . Then may ye die of thirst, every mother's son of yer! Not one of yer 'as the sperrit of a bug. Ye're the scum of the world. Work and starve!"

The mercurial Belfast suffers most, perhaps, from the burden of Wait's travesty of humility. Belfast is the man who steals the pie for Jimmy, who pulls him head-first from the deckhouse, who persuades the poised corpse to leave the ship. His over-sentient imagination springs from love unconditioned by clear discrimination of its object and he remains in hysterical subjection to a Beelzebub whom he has mistaken for a divinity. On shore he begs piteously for a relic of Wait's belongings which have been sealed up and delivered to the Board of Trade. Through his inconsolable affection for the departed he articulates, incompletely, the character of Wait as scapegoat:

> "You were his chum, too . . . but I pulled him out . . didn't I? Short wool he had . . . He wouldn't go . . . He wouldn't go for nobody!" He burst into tears. "I never touched him — never — never!" he sobbed. "He went, for me, like . . . like . . . a lamb."

* * * * *

The iconography of *The Nigger of the Narcissus* was not accomplished without a dangerous compromise between the naturalistic, biographical material and its symbolic transmutation, as I have footnoted above. Fearful of overstressing the subaqueous world of the underconsciousness, the symbol-producing level of the psyche which, in fact, was the most dependable source of his inspiration, Conrad overloaded his mundane treatment of the crew. As separate units of consciousness they are beautifully deployed for angles of relationship, but no one can deny that their professional virtues are overwritten, almost to the detriment of the narrative's aesthetic integrity. It is clear, in this direction, that Conrad had difficulty in serving myth and memory with equal justice. His narrator-perspective is awkwardly handled. The novel gets under way in the third person; in the middle of the second chapter it switches abruptly to the viewpoint of first person plural and remains there until the coda section, when it becomes first person singular. Presumably an unspecified member of the deck crew has carried the narration; in this case the contents of the thoughts of Mr. Creighton and of the cook, and many of the conversations, between Allistoun and his officer or between Donkin

and Wait, for example, are impossibly come by. And, with this handicap, the gilded sermonizings on the crew's high endeavor are doubly hard to accept. If Conrad was solicitous for the phenomenal level of his narrative, he might at least have supplied a recorder to whose endowments his own opulent prose would have been more apt. However, this novel was an early trial in the marriage of subject with its coordinating agencies; Conrad's craft was not yet wholly adequate to sustain an unfailing integrity of means.

Most curiously, quite apart from stylistic considerations, the novel prefigures the inhibition that Conrad thereafter suffered from in developing or acknowledging his more clairvoyant perceptions. Neither in the famous preface, appended to the 1914 edition, and the foreword that accompanied it, nor in his private communications on the subject, will one find any admission of cabalistic intent. The aesthetic of the preface, with its eloquent impressionism, is far too general to have any more bearing on this novel than on any other. The foreword guards the secret skillfully, while teasing suspicion that there is a secret: ". . . in the book he [Wait] is nothing; he is merely the center of the ship's collective psychology and the pivot of the action." Merely! Overt suggestions that he had enlisted transpersonal powers always launched Conrad into protests of respectability and of allegiance to the terrestrial, into panicky and often absurd interpretations of his own work (witness his fantastic explanations of "The Secret Sharer" and of *The Shadow Line*), into willful distortion of some of his finest literary efforts. But D. H. Lawrence has warned us: "Never trust the artist. Trust the tale."

The Nigger of the Narcissus is a fable with many layers of interconnection. "A work that aspires, however humbly, to the condition of art, should carry its justification in every line." So begins the preface to this work and in so far as the novel, itself, seeks to establish "the power of occult forces which," Conrad concedes elsewhere, "rule the fascinating aspects of the visible world," it does carry its justification. Without the other dimensions, it would be merely a tale of ships and men burdened by an iridescent futility of expression. As it is, the metaphors which significantly cluster at every magnetic point in the narrative illuminate the infernal core of its theme as, on the equator, the *Narcissus* floats in the aurora of the lightning, "like a charred ship enclosed in a globe of fire."

ROBERTS JACKSON:

Fly Away Home

That they were alone surprised her. Something was gone and yet she couldn't think what it was. The sun was high, the air cold and exhilarating. A nice day as far as Sundays go. Stem had taken on the traffic going out to the Orange Show and steered a path through it, one so wild and serpentine that neither knew when they had reached San Bernardino and started to climb, or, for that matter, how far up the pass they had come.

It was funny, on a motorcycle, how absorbed both of them got. They paid no attention to towns. He didn't like to stop and ask directions because it wasted traveling time. Nor did the girl, because it made her think of tomorrow; more than that, because the distance to the top of a mountain was their own affair. Knowing exactly would put them in a class with tourists — flabby, self-indulged. Yet in country like this it was hard to tell where you were at. She did not like the feeling and tried to think back.

Counting local cops and gas stations and all the intersections they had snarled, putting each in its proper place as best she could — doing that might bring her up to date, although she had no idea of the actual number. They had mounted a sidewalk once, but because it was a natural thing to do in emergency, she had forgotten where it had happened. Near the state hospital at Patton, not that this mattered, but somewhere in there.

Her clearest memory was of a station wagon driven by a nun, who was dressed as she was, in black. Her riding pants were that color, and her favorite pair of boots, and, under her leather jacket, her silk blouse, which cost as much as Stem made a week. No one could say she hadn't got her money's worth, for they made a nice contrast with the white kid jacket and the jeweled belt around her kidneys. The nun would have loved such fancy material. She was sure of it. They had recognized something in each other the half-minute it took Stem to pass, something as futile as wanting to trade places if only to know what the feeling was like, and every bit as sad. Shutting her eyes, she could see the woman's expression as they went on by, the envious stares of the children in the station wagon.

Out here looked as though it didn't have much to offer in the way

of excitement. She bet Sunday was the big deal, yet it was not in her to feel sympathetic, not now. Those kids had a home, and after reaching a certain age they were going to find out what she had learned at Girls' Republic: that church, though a good excuse for going into town, did not help you unwind. It never went far enough. And while she was thinking this over in relation to herself, it all slipped out of reach entirely, not because she wanted it to happen, but because of how glorious she felt.

Other things had already been dealt with: the suspicion that Stem wasn't as sick as he pretended; her hostility to Dr. Bauer. To none of it was she indifferent. She had put them off as long and successfully as this because they were men, neither one of whom listened to what she had to say. On Monday there would be a legal commitment which would make her further resistance useless — a paper bearing both signatures, so that her whole life seemed to consist of lost arguments and flattery.

The countryside was fading now as if bleached by ammonia. She was aware of it all in outline, yet there was little to cling to in the disconnected places unless it was Greyback up there ahead of them — and she couldn't do that. She wouldn't dare. For as long as possible she fought back lightheadedness, then with a grateful sigh gave up to it.

The air was delicious, so hard and pure she raised her goggles and let the knowledge of it dilate her eyes. They stung like fury, and the wet places down her cheek would chap in the wind — still, she didn't care. What trifles had concerned her never would again. She was drunk on the smell of greasewood, woozy and halfway gone, until the solitude added its finishing touch and speed brought them together as nothing else could, raw speed.

The thrust of it, the surge of noise surrounding her; noise, which couldn't be heard, burning her ankles: this was the wonderful thing about a motorbike. It seemed to lift her right out of herself, to purify any thought she had and tie it in with what was beyond and in store for them.

Already the road, just as she had dreamed it, was a strip of magnesium foil burning ahead of them through each successive foothill until it reached the mountains, there to be extinguished in a pile of boulders. Their bodies caught some of its fire as the dips grew more frequent and the pressure on the curves more exciting. Yet with Greyback no closer seemingly, the February sun cold and skeptical, with Stem unable to gauge these things for himself, she had to grasp his arm. When the pace was slow enough to suit her, she smoothed

away the tiny wrinkles she had twisted into his sleeve, counterclockwise, and locked her legs tight to his body. It was imperceptible to Stem. She did it without thinking.

They were climbing now. It was colder. Sage had changed to the crooked green of manzanita. There was buckthorn in blue patches along the firebreak, like old tattooing. Both were caught unawares when the road left its course and zigzagged up a small ravine. *Broo-ahhhh* went the motor and the exhaust grew hot enough to see. They shot out of sun into shadow and back into sun; the accumulation of sound at each of these sharp turns was deafening.

She saw it hurt his vanity to have to shift into a lower gear. He was crouched forward trying to glimpse the grade in relation to some landmark that would tell him its steepness, but there was nothing to go by, which amused her. The cliffs had closed in, there were no straight stretches to speak of, no trees. Yet she knew their degree of climb without looking back at the canyon below them — at least here was something her breasts were good for, inertia pulling them up and down, back and forth, as free as a spirit level — and this advantage over him made her laugh.

However, this discovery didn't make up for the deadliness of their speed. Stretched back in the seat, just so, she let her foot drag along the hardtop. Danger made it somewhat exciting. Her toe was inches away from the orange spokes of the wheel and now and then collided with pebbles which brought it closer. He did not like her to do this, but she kept on, hoping he would sense it and turn around. She needed his attention suddenly, wanted him to tell her what a bitch she was, as if he meant it. For just sitting there didn't prove you really existed.

And how dreary it was to stare at the back of his neck while he enjoyed himself, had all the fun. Stem was at his best steering a motorcycle, but his best was not what it should be. She had felt this her first ride. What he couldn't say, what he couldn't feel, he expressed through the Harley-Davidson, and with her sure sense of timing these things came alive. At present he was somebody else, removed from all that was familiar to them, though of course he could not shut her out indefinitely. Despite talk about tomorrow being arranged "to his own best interests," she always would be on Stem's side, unlike the Doctor.

Just the same, it angered her that he failed to see this, and while she considered telling it to him for perhaps the twentieth time, they came to a rise in the hill, which brought them back into a canyon

she recognized, except it was wider up here, more deeply indented. The bike again picked up speed and with it her power returned. She clung to his chest as they went singing across the Mill Creek bridge, its steel against their tires, moving brilliantly as the stream below them and as fluid.

Spruce trees floated by, and in one there was a chipmunk. She reached out her hand to it, and seemed to touch Greyback instead. The peak stood out supremely blue, and though a different shape at this angle, it dominated the range, the cleanest, most formidable of mountains. She was left a little stunned.

Looking up, she felt everything flow from her into Stem, each private thought, tiny impulses she had not been able to communicate. It was as if Greyback, seen from her bathroom window, was still fifty miles away, and they would never get there. Both worked as one vessel, leaning on the outside curves, banking on the ins. They seldom left the white line, even where the road was beginning to buckle through frost and winter rains.

The whole world lay in the swivel of her lap. Mountains seemed to respond to her slightest pressure, as did the sun, the sky, and crags towering above them, down to a blemish on Stem's neck from an old carbuncle. She was at the very center of things, and time a glint of chrome from the handlebar. Of no more importance than that.

When they got to the Forest Home and stopped at Igo's for gas, she felt shaken inside. Her legs were wobbly. And to regain composure she walked away from Stem, although it tore her to do so, up the log steps into the store where six or seven people sat by a fire, getting warm. They were quiet as she came in. A woman let her breath out, as though swallowing dry. The man in the polo shirt got up and stood behind the counter.

She bought candy, Cheese-Its, some meat spread, and a tube of camphor ice instead of Mentholatum because it didn't smell. Then she read about campfires, National Forests, and stoves in cabins, giving herself something to do while the men whispered behind her back. The woman was too timid, although she could feel the little mouse memorizing every stitch she had on. When she finally could take it no longer, she turned to stare with open hostility, her chest inflated, which had its effect on them all.

"Beer?" she asked, her voice harsh. "We'll want it in cans."

The man stopped to consider. "I don't keep it on ice, girlie. It's not worth fooling with out of season."

"That's not what I asked you."

"How much did you have in mind?"

Inside she was set against him, his whole manner, as oftentimes she was set against herself. She gave a disdainful glance around the room. "Whatever it takes for *them* to get a buzz-on, double that." She could think of things she would rather drink than warm beer. Stem wasn't crazy about it either, yet she wasn't going to let this man get the best of her, sick as he looked, nor as bothered by her now. His wasn't a weak face.

"Tell you what," he said slowly. "You folks come back — in, say, an hour." He nodded toward his living quarters. "We can crowd some into the cooler."

"No."

"All right. Give us an idea where you'll be staying and maybe one of the neighbors will haul it for you later on. That suit you?"

"We'll take it with us, thanks . . . if you can bear to part with it, Pop."

"How many?"

Everyone put off breathing in order to hear what she was going to say. If they hadn't been so nosy at first, she would have felt sorry for them. Otherwise it seemed too late for such hopeless people. They sat around here on Sundays, in a grocery store, hoping someone would stop by and give them something to think about. Well, what she had to say would last them the rest of the year, and in her mind she increased the order so they would have something good and big to hash over.

"I don't know — a case. A case and a half."

While that sank in, she walked across the room to a slot machine, her hips swinging. She jingled the change in her pocket like a man, pulled out some quarters and put in six in quick succession, then walked outside before she saw if any coins were returned. The machine was still spinning.

Stem was on his knees, fiddling with the carburetor. She knew that nothing was really wrong by the way he worked — staring hard at the ground while he made complicated finger adjustments. Let him play important if he had to, she didn't mind. She was going to kid him about the Harley-Davidson, his sore spot, except that the man brought the beer and there wasn't time. Six quarters lay on top of the carton.

Stem looked at the beer shaking his head when the man caught his eye and winked. Then wordlessly they packed it away in the saddlebags. There was nothing she could do but sit on the steps and count

them — twenty-eight cans, which was all they had room for.

"Fine-looking machine," the man said.

Stem nodded, the half-scowl making his face look ever so much darker, for he was never sure that people meant what they said.

"Much of a drain on you?"

"No more than cars," he answered. Their eyes met, but it was the man who turned away first. This seemed to please Stem for some reason. Pointing out the advantages of a motorcycle, he talked more than she had heard him in the past six months. He forgot to stand up straight, held his shoulders relaxed, so that in faded green cover-alls he didn't look so small and top-heavy and pigeon-chested.

Teeth on edge, she sat listening for fifteen minutes while it sounded like one woman urging, and the other wondering what it must be like to turn professional. She coughed at this because it annoyed her. She sighed, had an ironic conversation with herself, then caught sight of a face at the window before it disappeared, which was the last straw.

"Say, you, how's the trail up there?" she broke in, pointing toward Greyback.

"What makes you think there is one?"

The man looked at her with new interest, then back to Stem, who made a wilting gesture with his hands and pulled out a chamois to polish the metal flaps, the brightly enameled tank, the glass dials of the dash. He looked like a rebellious little ferret, poking in and out of things. His hair was too long. Some day she would make him shave off those sideburns he was so proud of, she decided.

"Why not?" Her tone was critical. "I get around." Nor was the abruptness lost on Stem.

She waited to hear more about it, but Stem remembered gasoline and the two men filled the tank, busying themselves with the saddle-bag, where they strapped on an extra can of two gallons. Half the beer came out, only part of it got packed in again. Stem took the hint when she walked over and claimed possession of the seat, climbing on, too. He knew her patience was gone, that she might make a scene, and no wonder. He'd become absolutely impossible.

"You're not going to try her on this?" said the man. "That old lady is cold and steep. You'll freeze."

Stem kicked the starter for an answer. The motor took hold, which marked the end of fooling around.

"Don't do it," the man shouted.

She touched Stem's arm to idle down. "Tell me why. Wasn't it meant for motorcycles?"

"Oh sure, sister. It's what the CCC boys used to say, but they were the ones who built it. You'd expect them to brag. That trail hasn't been kept up since then."

Stem let out the clutch, anxious to do so before she could signal, and they started up the road with the man running after them. "Your change," he shrieked. "Slot machine's broken. You didn't have a chance." She made a derisive gesture that included the people on the porch. There were no more doubts, for they were climbing in earnest. It was even a different sound, and she didn't trouble herself to look back.

On up from Igo's the road was dusty, tortuous, and unpaved. Every fifty feet they came to a deep thank-you-ma'am, which jolted the bike and set her back to aching. She tightened the belt with careful fingers, impervious to pain, and saw a dust cloud trail out in back of them for miles. Air currents scooped it from the road in a continuous piece so that it seemed to be sky-writing. To look at it made her dizzy.

They passed the Dolly Varden, a beer hall and dance pavilion, which was boarded up. She tried to imagine what it was like in the summertime, but failed.

And before long they were lost to each other. Something didn't jibe. Stem was going fast enough, yet his movements were wooden. He held himself in and headed straight for a stretch of washboard, which pounded the frame and was punishing to them both. She let that one go by until he did the same thing again, then understood that his heart had gone out of it, that he wanted to turn back.

About to lose her temper, she determined not to, to play his little game for all it was worth. She had the seat, the easiest place to ride; Stem straddled the tank up forward. His legs could take only so much pounding in that position, which was tough luck considering his insides. But since he had started this, she would see it through, and let the best man win.

They squeezed every bump out of the road until both were hurting, and it felt as though they were opposed, on different motorcycles. She had long ago lost track of time. To sit upright raised the center of gravity. Leaning out when the bike came in of its own accord, resisting Stem at every turn made it tiring for him, but her teeth ached. She tasted dirt, the goggles had grown sweaty, her thighs seemed to chafe one another while gripping the seat. Her nipples were sore and hard.

It was a nightmare swollen out of reality. She felt bruised, her nostrils were clotted with dust, each hair burned. Just holding on was all she could do, praying that something, maybe his kidneys, would give out before she did. Finally it happened. When they reached the ridge route and took the narrower fork in the road, he slowed down.

He looked in both directions for a place to stop, cheeks sucked in, his face grey. They went on a bit farther, scarcely crawling, to where the road dipped down to Barton Flats. He pulled over onto a carpet of pine needles and left the bike while it was still in motion. She fell with it, over-balanced, rolling her leg out of the way and lay there panting.

When they got back their strength and had something to eat, washed down with beer, it was obvious that neither had given in. Stem pulled off his pants to examine his leg, which was purple to the knee, the veins an angry red. He applied camphor ice to both, though the other leg wasn't as bad, wincing at his own touch. Then, while she slipped out of her jacket and blouse and bound her breasts to her body with a bandana, he turned his back on her, began polishing the bike. It was deliberate, spitefully done, and this angered her.

Suddenly he looked up and caught the expression on her face, so that she turned away — in a sense, had to back down, which was galling. She freshened her lipstick prolonging it while she wondered about his stare. He might kill her, beat her up, or leave her here marooned: they were all three possibilities, yet only the last frightened her. This was the one she would fear always, because of what it meant.

As it grew in her mind, she moved toward the motorcycle, mirror in hand to keep the thought hidden from Stem. Their eyes met, then she felt terribly let-down, disgusted with herself. He was chewing a fingernail. It was so ridiculous.

"Come here to mama, Hot Lips."

Slapping his hand away, she put lipstick on him in bold red slashes, which he suffered without being fully aware of what it was. "Hold still. This'll fix the soreness." Before he could start up again, as both were getting settled, she held the glass up to his face to let Stem have a peek at what she had done. He stiffened but said nothing. Not even to her remark: "Ahhh, isn't he sweet."

He was all business after that. His judgments were expert and sure, though they were traveling faster than seemed necessary. Stem no longer sought out bumps, just drove himself in a hard, disciplined way that was encouraging. They reached Palestine Flats and sped through yellow pine. A lone cabin flashed by. Near the turn-off at

Barton a totem pointing toward the scout camp grinned back at her. Stem behaved perfectly as scud clouds crossed a range of mountains that stood between them and the desert on the other side, and there was nothing she could find fault with.

Soon they were in sight of the control road leading up to Jenk's Lake — one lane, cut zigzag through perpendicular faults and crumbling red granite until it was lost to her at what appeared an impossible elevation. Two cars, directly ahead of them, stood waiting behind the eastbound gate, but it was closed. A big sign showed in red letters the control times for east-bound traffic — one-thirty, three, and four-thirty.

For though traffic had been meager, the attendant still observed these long intervals, and she couldn't tell whether Stem resented this or found it funny. He saw the warning, and saw the people collected outside a wooden shelter, which separated one gate from the other, but as they swung left, Stem gave no sign that he intended this maneuver seriously. It was just a chance to get even, since he was satisfied scaring her half to death; only there was no time for that: to check for cars, even to see if it were safe, before they were through the left gate and going up a steep, mountain road.

He met the first descending car at a place easy to pass. The next one came fast and so unexpectedly from around a hairpin curve, her knee was grazed as they went up the bank, over a worn retaining wall, and down ten feet. The bottom of her stomach seemed to come undone, yet somehow they regained the road and kept on climbing. When she looked back, the driver stood, both fists in the air and with a front wheel hanging in space. Seeing he was all right, they waved at the same time, which was a good omen, and Stem waggled the tail of the bike. The lipstick had sent him through, with a twenty-to-one chance of making it. It was just like him to be that embarrassed.

The third car, a pick-up truck that was olive green in the sunlight, must have been warned by telephone. It waited next to an impassable cliff, blocking the road, while a man with work gloves stood waving for them to stop, a caretaker or forest official.

Stem double-clutched down to fifteen miles an hour, until he was fifty yards away from its yellow and black-striped bumper. Then he aimed for the truck with a terrifying burst of speed. Slowing imperceptibly, he made the motorcycle backfire, his spark retarded. As they came head-on, the man jumped out of the way. The bike swung onto the outside shoulder, clearing the fender by inches, which gave them as much balance as an up-ended dime.

She sat huddled up, while poor Stem, unable to pull in his elbows, let the right one drag against the body of the truck. It made a fleshy sound until the handle grip drowned this out with a higher pitched squeal of rubber. He had to choke the handlebar farther forward and steer from there. The vibration stung his fingers — just listening to it was torture enough.

The road disappeared. The wheels, pulled by loose dirt, were opposed, floundering. She shut her eyes experimentally and everything was green. On one side lay the sensation of emptiness, nearness on the other. So immediate was their danger, she could not distinguish between them, or know which to choose, yet neither one existed while she and Stem were together as close as this, not even death.

The shoulder gave away, where the road hadn't been reinforced, it seemed to liquefy, as the bike slipped lower with her weight, then dry land came up to meet them. It was solid — and so disappointing. How foolish she had been. The momentum had led her into thinking something else. But they were coming through to each other; that's what counted most. She would slow up now and wait for Stem to feel the same way she did, and for as long as she lived this would never happen again.

Jenk's Lake was small, hemmed-in looking, and she wanted to get away from the wooded shore and its half-dozen summer camps and cabins as fast as they could. It depressed her, frozen over like this, with a little tumor of smoke coming from a chimney on the far side where there was a grey, reflected light but no sun.

Stem, also, sensed that it was tame and did not fit their mood. He skirted the lake quickly until they reached the last cabin, which must have belonged to the caretaker himself, judging by its size, the fresh woodpile, and Indian blanket washed and stiffening on the line.

He turned up the front path on impulse, drove along the porch and off the other side. Rustic bannisters whirred by, she kicked over an empty kerosene can, and the bike went down four steps without blowing a tire, through a pack of dogs, back to where the road ended in a circle and the trail up to Greyback began. Stem went around the monument a couple of times, which was a brilliant beginning and the perfect end. No one had ever shared anything as fully. She patted him for a long time to show her approval; of how unquestioning his heart could be when he didn't interfere and spoil things for them both.

Their first view of the desert came at Big Meadow; then when they left its springy peat, the field of lupin which lacked color at this altitude, water bubbling up everywhere, they were in shale, enormous

pencil-like pieces of it, and the trees had changed to stunted piñons.

She noticed that it was stormy. They were moving under an overcast that was part of Greyback this time of year, but every so often they stopped while Stem checked the bike to keep it from getting over-heated. This was necessary since they were dependent on the Harley-Davidson, yet she found it exasperating. The trail was furrowed out of continuous cliff now and where landslides had carried it away in places, they had to get off and walk. Neither of them could see ahead, and though Stem seemed to know which way to go, mostly by instinct, it was tiring and took longer. When they came to a small ravine, he wouldn't turn back or retrace his steps, refusing to with a look that frightened as much as it thrilled her. They tried lifting the bike across, one to the other, but it was too heavy for her and Stem could not manage alone. So she scrambled over, sending some rocks below, to sit there confident that he'd figure out a way to join her.

As Stem started the motor, her heart stopped pounding, for it was impossible for him to ride across. But he ran alongside the bike, throttling it by hand, then angled off and to his right above the trail. The rear tire shot out gravel and dust. The motor, smoking, slipped to one side and burned a scar in his boot. Yet on he came while she cheered, until he was across the gap, fifteen feet away, and almost on top of her.

The motorcycle went dead, knocking Stem off his feet, and both slid down to the lip of the trail, where she braced herself to keep the combined weight from going over the side. Pebbles flowed past her body, increasing in size, until the canyon was full of thunder. They gazed at each other without smiling. The only noise left was the pinking of the exhaust pipe as it cooled, and so immense was her pride in Stem that time stood motionless until she finally got him a beer.

He sucked it in, and drops of sweat began to ooze from his forehead and grimy face. They shared the next can, which exploded under the opener and sprayed her clothes. It seemed to exalt them, to bring release from the caution of living. They were seized by a wonderful frenzy of recklessness and started working up the trail again in perfect unison.

She pushed behind the bike till her cheek was cut by flying particles. She went ahead of him to coax. She threatened, slapped him, did everything but lie down and make a mat of her body. Stem toiled up the last forty feet with his face buried in the lamb's-wool seat, and when they got to the ridge above the timber line where lightning flickered, she saw that he had bitten it, torn a piece out of the fur —

except this didn't register. They were stupefied on beer, and how high up it was. As yet he had not noticed that her side of the bike was badly dented, not because of how dark it had grown up here, but because Stem was fascinated by the sight of his arms trembling and jerking involuntarily where they rested against one knee.

Knowing the storm would catch them, she was glad, for without it they would never make the top, and her need to get there after coming so far had increased. Her face burned where she had tripped and fallen headlong against the hot exhaust. A bolt of lightning, the purest color she had ever seen, hit close by, yet the sound barely glanced off them in the wind. Nor was there a world below, and thus undistracted, she could go on indefinitely.

"Get up," she shrieked at Stem. "Get up, get up, get up!" And it seemed one of the most natural things to be beating him with a sharp piece of slate.

He rose drunkenly. Together they set the motorcycle upright and Stem climbed on bleeding while she steadied it for him. There was nothing here but motion and cold blasts of air. The trail was smooth. It ran along the ridge unimpeded, sometimes in the open, more often buttressed by stone, and there was nothing to struggle against. They used their legs as out-riggers, which helped to counteract the wind, but it did not keep the bike from swaying.

A few minutes later Stem hit a rock. It slammed her forward, which tore something loose in her neck, and she fell off sobbing with rage while he rolled back the Harley-Davidson, unmindful of her, and smashed into the boulder again and again. The tire punctured, it began to shred, spokes stuck through. And while the steel rim flattened inexorably there was nothing she could do but watch. Her muscles were poised, there was strength in them but she could not act. Stiffening with cold, she worked her way out of the gale, still facing the summit of Greyback.

At the next flash, she saw him a quarter of a mile beyond, a small, maddened bug moving among dry ice fragments and vapor. The bike inched along like a small plow, its front wheel nearly gone. Again darkness opened and he was pulling it after him, dead weight — but not up the trail. Stem was backing into the wind, struggling to reach a place on the horizon when the summit lay elsewhere, in a quite different direction.

As she always did with Stem, she got to her feet unthinkingly, impelled to set him straight, until there came a light of much less brilliance, the flare of gasoline. He was attempting to refuel the

motorcycle but spilled it over the cylinder walls instead, while wind trailed flame up the sleeve to his body turning him into a torch faster than it could explode against the heated metal.

In the end there was a blast, a final separation which offended her, then darkness and freezing. It had been her mistake. For the lives of both had been compromised when Stem chose selfishly. She felt cheated, deeply hurt, yet without crying, not even angry at this betrayal, she began to crawl in the right direction. Crawling, so she would be found farther up the slope than he.

SOL CHANELES:

Gabriella and the Lonely Horn

She waits: there by the perch stalls,
The parade goes on, in twos and files
They fill the corridors.

Her rhetoric conjures up the sea.
She smiles, heaping tender passion
On eels and mackerels.

Impaled, gills red, eyes bright, scales rough
A porgy bloats, croaks, gets tossed
Among a fresh batch-catch of pickerel and lost.

Down to the bay, the fishermen
Write their ichthyography in torn fishnets.

Known to her of the whiting breath
And band-blue coolness of her trout eyes
He is there.

She waits there by the perch stalls,
Bloated ankles overlapping the shoes
Carping her wares and numbers as night falls.

W. S. MERWIN:

A Dance of Death

King

I saw from a silk pillow
All high stations and low
Smile when I spoke, and bow,
And obey and follow.
All men do as I do.
I went in gold and yellow,
Ermine and gemmed shoe,
And was human even so,
Et, ecce, nunc in pulvere dormio.

Monk

I hoped that all sinners who
Wore a saintly sorrow
Into heaven should go.
All this did I do:
Walk with the eyes low,
Keep lonely pillow,
Many days go
Fasting and hollow,
All my bounty bestow,
Et, ecce, nunc in pulvere dormio.

Scholar

I sat like a shadow,
The light sallow,
Reasoning yes and no.
One thing I came to know.
I heard the mouse go,
Heard whispers in the tallow,
Wind disputing, "Although . . ."
Night on the candle blow,
Et, ecce, nunc in pulvere dormio.

Huntsman

The wind blew
In the cold furrow;
The falcon flew;
These did I follow:
Deerhound, doe,
Fox upon snow,
And sent the arrow,
And was chased, who did follow,
And came to this burrow,
Et, ecce, nunc in pulvere dormio.

Farmer

I walked with plow
On the green fallow;
All I did harrow
Dirt does undo.
Out at elbow
I lie to mellow,
Set in a furrow,
The weeds' fellow,
Quod, ecce, nunc in pulvere dormio.

Woman

I was as green willow,
My hands white and slow,
Love and increase below.
Be reaped as you did sow.
I am bitter as rue.
Now am I also
Defaced and hollow,
Nursing no shadow
Quod, ecce, nunc in pulvere dormio.

Epitaph

Lords, I forget what I knew;
I saw false and true,
Sad and antic show,
Did profane and hallow,

Saw the worthies go
Into the still hollow
And wrote their words, even so,
Et, ecce, nunc in pulvere dormio.

PHYLLIS HIRSHLEIFER:

Lament

Because the form was like my own,
A rhythm of skin on a frame of bone,
And each gesture of lip or hand or eye
Reenacted some pledge of privacy
The heart could name,
Reach out to claim,
I took the enemy for my love
And gave him what he meant to have.

Poem

Whom he had known
That Cressida,
Like the breath of an animal,
Fell upon him smothering?
What passion, poisonous,
Sank its jaw
Into the creating hand
To form
Out of the simple woman of old ages
That dark image?

JO SINCLAIR:

The Family

The seven children lived in an abandoned garage, in a part of the city which had been partially demolished in one of the first of the air raids. It was Tom who had found home for them.

To the children, the most perfect thing about Tom was that he did not treat Mike any differently, even though they were brothers. Everybody was treated the same, because everybody was the family. And Tom was the oldest, fourteen, the head of the family.

Over a period of six or seven months, he had found most of the others in the streets of the city, brought them home to the safe, comfortable smells of old gas and oil, the flecks of rust in corners, from tools which had hung there so long ago. The really wonderful thing to all of them was that they were the family now, with a home, with a one to lead, to praise or threaten, to hold them together as firmly as if they shared a last name. They had been alone so long, before Tom.

It was true that Joe had had a father in the army, but he was probably dead after the five years of being away. And it was true that Dave had had a brother Jack in the navy, but somehow he too had disappeared into the strangeness and confusion of that other world, the one they could scarcely remember when they thought of once-upon-a-time.

The rest of the family did not like them to have fathers or brothers, Joe and Dave had discovered. The last time they had mentioned the other life, the one before the war, even Betty and Mary had moved away and would not talk to them. And Cathy had cried most of the night.

The next morning, on their way to look for food, Joe had said to Dave, "I guess they don't like it if we have a different family, too."

"Well, do you think Tom was mad?" Dave said, nervously scratching the sore on his cheek.

"He didn't say nothing."

"Yeah, but he gets mad if anybody cries." Dave's heart seemed to pinch, but he said it anyway: "Let's not talk about fathers any more."

"O.K.," Joe said, his voice reedy but determined. "Or your brother Jack. Tom says it's Cathy who's real important to—. You know, it's

worse when babies cry," he finished in a blurt.

"Yeah," Dave said, wincing. "Well, come on. Tom said to stand on the Square today. We haven't begged there for a week."

"Yeah, but he said watch out for that cop. That big guy. He grabs kids and puts them in institutions."

"Not us, he won't!" Dave cried. "Not our family."

Tom had found Joe and Dave at the half-empty cans back of the Continental Restaurant, fighting each other for the bones and wet bread crusts. He had pulled them apart and stood squinting at them, studying their tears of fury. Then he had asked them, in his cold way, if they wanted to be members of the family.

He had found Betty and Mary, too, carefully watching them as they begged on the fringe of the Square. He had noticed them because they looked so frightened, because they stood away from the mass of rough children who called out their bold, almost sneering pleas for money and food. As he studied them, he had questioned himself searchingly on whether or not to take girls in. Then — whether it was their gentle, frightened tears, or some muffled wrench of longing within himself after all the years in which he had stamped out longing — he sauntered up to Betty and Mary and invited them gruffly to join the family.

It was Tom's brother Mike who had found Cathy, brought her and her precious Annie home. He had led her into the garage, and Cathy had said to Tom, the tallest there, the one with the most suspicious eyes and the deepest scowl, knowing he was the head: "Where's the family? Mike said! He said we got a family!"

It was somewhat as if they had adopted a baby, even to the most important point of saving the best pieces of food for her. Tom often thought with a feeling of relief that at least Annie did not have to eat. Annie was Cathy's rag doll, to be carried everywhere, just as she had been carried out of a house one day in Cathy's other life. What that other life had been, and how it had closed that day, Tom did not know. There had been a Mama; he knew that, because the baby called for her when she was too hungry at night, or too cold.

Had there been a Papa? That day Cathy came, Tom went abruptly out into the yard — to watch for planes, he told the others. Standing in the freezing open, staring up at the sky, he permitted himself to think tenderly for a few moments of his brother Mike. It was permission he granted himself only when he was alone, and only rarely. Family life, Tom had decided a long time back, was

easier if he thought of nobody but the family and nothing but "now." And now meant only getting enough to eat. Now was a dangerous word, it was true, just as every day of life was, but the real peril lay in remembering old days, the old life like faded, beautiful dreams of mothers and fathers.

It was not until the new occupation army had marched into the city, and the streets been divided between the new and the old armies, that Tom knew he would have to do something desperate. Either the new soldiers chased them out of the downtown streets, or the old soldiers threatened them with prison. Day by day, begging became more difficult.

For the first time since forming the family, he was panicky with the fear that it would be broken up, destroyed in some way. Nights, when he finally got home and began emptying his pockets of bread crusts and chicory, and those light-green weeds that sometimes chewed sweet even though they were frozen, his heart pounded until he had quickly counted the family and found all members still there.

He could not bear to say any of the fear out loud. Dave had put it into words, finally, cornering him outside the garage one night, and whispering, "Tom, where'll I go tomorrow? They say the new army has a law — no more begging."

"Nuts! Since when are their laws for us?" Tom had whispered back savagely. "Don't beg downtown. Go to the side streets. Hear me?"

"I hear you," Dave had said uneasily, mumbling the rest of it in his throat. "But they haven't got anything there. I go around the back door, like you said to, and they holler to go away. They chase me. Some man threw rocks at me today."

"Let them holler. Go to the next house. Rocks? They couldn't hit a tank — not if it was in front of them! What's the matter, scared?"

"Heck, no," Dave had said, with shame.

"Well, don't be scaring the family! Hear me?"

But in the midst of his fierceness, Tom's stomach had fallen in with the ache of *what'll I do, what'll I do!*

It went on for a while. There were parades for hours. The new army put on demonstrations of planes and shooting every morning, and in the afternoon the old army held its parade, then showed off its tanks and planes. There were soldiers and officials everywhere in the city, and begging became more and more impossible.

Then, very suddenly, the only solution occurred to Tom. The garage was beginning to fill with a kind of violet dusk when he got home

that day. It was the color, the light, that made him homesick for memories, and he felt so tired that he could not go inside for a minute or two. From the doorway, as he listened to the sound of still another plane demonstration, his eyes searched for the baby. Then he counted the family. They were all there, lying on the floor. The sound strengthened, came thick and roaring overhead, and for an instant the crooked garage walls shook; then the planes were past them, the air slowly draining of the throbbing sound.

Tom pushed the door shut, went without a word to the family and lay down near them. It was a way to warm themselves, they had discovered a long time ago, hands touching, the closeness seeping way inside. As Tom hid his face against his arms, another group of planes flew up, somewhere near, the roar growing in intensity for a moment and then drifting off.

"They're over the Square now," Joe said. "It's kind of funny, isn't it? So many planes, and no bombs?"

The seven children lay very close together, their ragged clothes touching, but for once they could not get warm. The first darkness of evening had settled in corners of the draughty place, and the wind came in, so that the shadows seemed to move from corner to corner. The old, old smells of gasoline and oil hovered close to the floor, and they sniffed eagerly at the familiar air of home, but they could not get warm.

One by one, they began to watch Tom. He was lying on his stomach, completely motionless with his exhaustion and dread, but he felt them peering at him, staring, waiting.

Betty groaned. "It's my insides," she explained to the family. "It hurts. It's all puffed up. Hard."

"All right, cut it out," Tom muttered. "Everybody's stomach hurts. That's nothing new."

"My teeth hurt," Mike said with an air of smugness. "Just like a big old fire in my head, but I don't care."

"It's the bread," Betty explained again, as Joe began to rub her stomach. "It was green, but I ate it. It was only a teeny piece, too. What hurts, the green?"

"You ate something by yourself?" Tom demanded. His face was still buried in his arms because he was too tired to make himself look angry. "You're supposed to bring home everything you find. You know that."

With an enormous effort, he forced his head up and made himself glare at Betty.

"I'm going to send you back," he said, his voice hard. "That's where selfish people belong. Out there — not with the family. You can go and live with the others. That's where you belong."

Betty stiffened. "But it was green!" she whispered frantically. "And awful teeny. Honest to God, it was real dirty. I didn't think the family'd even want it. Please, Tommy! Please don't send me back!"

He let her shiver for a while. Then, when he sensed the echo of terror in all the others, he said sternly, "Stop crying! All right, this once you made a mistake. This once you can stay here, you won't have to go back there to them. Stop crying, I said! You're ten years old — the only one who can cry here is Cathy. She's the baby. Hear me?"

"O.K.," Betty whispered. "I'll never, never do it again."

Now that the reprimand had been given, and the terrible threat about "the others" said aloud, they all moved closer and twined their bony arms around one another, lay there listening to the planes.

"Nobody brought home anything to eat today," Tom said.

He felt his scalp creep, but he kept himself from scratching. As the head of the family, he had to be a good example at all times. He went on, his voice expressionless. "We've got to do something. We didn't even get enough for Cathy."

The plane sound came in more vibrant, heavier layers. "The whole city's full of beggars," Dave said hesitantly. "Grown-ups, too."

"Yeah," Tom said. "It's tough to buck grown-ups."

Mike's body jerked. He was afraid, and he yearned for a special look. "This is the eleventh time the planes are up," he said. "I counted, all day. Tom, are they going to start bombing again?"

Tom paid no attention to him, and Mike sighed, made himself lie still. But he thought fiercely: Tom's my brother. He likes me best of all. He'll take care of me because he likes me best!

Tom sat up. He did not look at Mike, but he felt him in his head like a moan. There was no use waiting. He had to do it.

"Well," he said, "I've got a scheme. Sit up, everybody. This is business — up, come on!"

When they were all sitting up, he looked intently from one blotched, pale face to another. The plane sound was still steady somewhere, very close to them. The garage was almost dark, but Tom could see the small blobs of faces and he felt the eyes watching him,

felt how they were all waiting for him to speak. It was true, he was the head of the family. He felt their dependence in all his aching bones.

Cathy began to whimper, suddenly, as if sensing the fear all around her. "Tommy, Tommy, my tooth!"

She came to him and opened her mouth, but the garage had darkened at last so that he could not see inside. He put his palms against her face, framing it within his dirty, gentle hands.

"I'll make it go away," he promised. "You forget it and I'll take care of it."

He pressed her soft cheeks until she stopped crying. The touch of her face, delicate and thin, gave him a queer feeling of comfort.

"Listen," he said to the family, his hands still soothing the child, "when the planes quit, we'll go out."

He began to talk very quickly then, in a rough, sure voice. "When we find this certain street, we'll hide. When some man comes along, we'll jump him and knock him on the head. When he's down, we'll take his money and run home. Then tomorrow, I'll go out and buy stuff to eat."

He felt Cathy's mouth open, felt her warm sick breath on his hands, and he pushed her away before she could make him too afraid to go on with it.

"They'll catch us!" Mary said, her voice shrill. She was usually so quiet, so steady. She was the oldest, next to him, and in an odd sort of way Tom had grown to depend on her to help with the little ones. The tone of her voice now made him swallow.

"Kill him?" Mike said. Tom knew how he was shivering. He knew how the shivers felt to his brother, cold, coming in long, nauseating spirals.

It took him a moment to force the right tone of harshness. "We don't talk about killing people."

He felt their fear hanging on him, like dead weight, all over him. "I'm head of the family," he said. "Hear me?"

He waited for their shadow nods, then he explained it to them, very carefully, his voice quick again. "We've got to eat. Our family. The others aren't going to give us anything to eat. We know that. All they want to do is get rid of us — lock us up in those places they got. O.K., we've got to get something to eat by ourselves. Nobody's separating us — putting us in institutions. Not our family."

They inched closer to him as he talked. Tom felt them listening and waiting, just as he felt the first of the outside silences begin, the planes down and silent somewhere. He went on, his voice very hard

so that they would all think he was sure of the whole thing.

"All right, there go the planes. They'll douse the lights soon. Now listen — here's what we'll do. All of us'll hide except Mary. Mary, you'll stand on the sidewalk. When some man walks up, you'll stop him and beg. He won't give you anything, but while you're talking Mike and Dave and Betty'll jump him. Then I'll hit him on the head. Cathy, you'll watch out for people coming — you're a big girl, hear me? Joe, you'll listen — you got the best ears. As soon as I holler 'Beat it' we all start running. Back home, the whole bunch of us — fast as we can. Hear me?"

They nodded. Tom hestitated. "Money doesn't buy a lot these days," he mumbled, in an effort to comfort them, "but it'll get us a whole loaf of bread, I'll bet. Maybe some milk, huh?"

"A whole loaf of bread," Betty said dreamily.

Her voice was like a sudden whip at Tom. "O.K., come on!"

Outside the garage, the city was still, the searchlights gone from the sky. The children stumbled out into a piercing cold, feeling their bones go soft as rags in their legs. Cathy, clutching her Annie, hung on to Tom's coat with her other hand.

"Wipe your nose on your sleeve," he told her. "You're making too much noise, snuffling that way. No squawking now, or I'll get mad. Watch, like a great big girl. If somebody comes, call my name real loud."

He went on with orders. "Dave, Joe, don't forget I'm depending on you. Betty, don't be scared to jump the guy and hold on tight — the rest of us'll be right there. Mary, beg like a little kid, real sad. I'll do everything else. Mike, I'll be there every second so you don't have a thing to worry about. Hear me?"

They all answered, "O.K." in muffled voices. Mike touched his hand, and in the darkness Tom gave him back a brief, fierce squeeze of love.

"Let's go," he told them quietly.

He led through the darkest streets. As they came near the darkened Square, they walked cautiously, peering for soldiers. Some of the walls of apartment houses were down in crumbled heaps, and they could look into rooms, see fallen beds, a picture on a wall, an occasional twisted chair.

"There's a good mattress," Mary whispered with excitement.

"Not now," Tom whispered back. "Try and remember where we saw it. In case we can grab it later."

They followed him closely. "Wipe your nose," he said automatically

to Cathy, and all of them sniffled, drew their sleeves over their noses.

"Now," Tom said, stopping the group just inside a darker side street. "I was here today — people had coats on, and they all carried bags of stuff. This is the street I figured out."

The family stared, motionless. "Mary!" he rapped out.

She turned immediately to the command in his voice, walked slowly into the street.

Tom hid the others in corners of the first front yard, and then stood behind a tree, his eyes burning and throbbing as he watched Mary. He made himself think of how they were a family and they had to stay together, he the head, he the one who must not let the togetherness be destroyed: because if it went this time, it would disappear forever. He knew it.

A half-brick was in one hand, his fingers so tight they hurt on the sharp edges. Of them all, he felt Mike most deeply, knew how Mike's fists were clenched with terror. In the darkness, in the midst of the horrible sensation cutting through him, he let himself remember what a fat baby Mike had been, how round, how he had laughed most of the time. His thoughts, his memories, began to whine toward his mother, but he made a tremendous effort to move safely back from that other life, that dream which could explode like a bomb again and again in a person's heart.

Mary stood all alone on the far sidewalk. He watched her so hard that his eyes watered. She looked small and very thin, her scarf wound around her head, the wind jagged at the hem of her skirt.

When the first walker came into sight, Tom felt a bursting sensation in his throat, like a gush of blood. "Watch out," he whispered, behind him. He heard Mary's pitiful voice: "Help the poor. Help the hungry. Please help the poor."

At the back of his head, he thought, Good job, good for Mary, good, good. Then he saw the dark blotch of the walker stop moving, overshadow Mary's little body.

He began to creep forward. His eyes were watering so badly he could scarcely see. He felt the others behind him, creeping with him, knew that the same emotion was prickling their spines. He knew Mary's eyes were widening in the darkness, as she moaned up at the man, keeping him there. He knew, behind him, Mike's aching teeth were grinding against each other. He moved on, in the shadows of hedges and frozen shrubs.

Then, in a whisper that seemed to roar in his head, he screamed, "O.K.!"

The family jumped, from behind him and from all about him, grabbed the man's arms and legs. Tom hit the back of a head with the brick, and suddenly a body lay still at their feet. But it was a woman; she had shrieked once. Tom was so shocked he could not move. He had taken it for granted that it would be a man.

Cathy began to cry. As if the sound was a signal, Tom jumped. It took him a second to find the woman's purse.

"All right, beat it!" he shouted, standing up on shaking legs.

As they ran, the streets seemed darker and colder. Tom led again, holding Cathy's icy hand, pulling her along without feeling weight or drag. His mouth was dry, and as he ran a drum pounded in his stomach.

"Stick together," he called as they ran. "Faster. Mike, faster. Hold on my jacket."

They ran, their mouths open and sucking in the bitter air, their shaggy hair streaming behind or whipped by the wind into their eyes. They felt the bones giving way in their legs. They felt their skin burning, their stomachs floating in nausea. At their heels, they felt the soldiers, the people, the anonymous, many-headed enemy.

Then a series of shots began, faint behind them, orderly as rapped-out commands. For a split second of panic, they all stopped. Even Tom paused, to look back into the blackness of the city.

"Tom, Tom," his brother wailed.

At that, Tom cursed wildly. "It's only the soldiers! Practicing — that's all. Hear me? I said, beat it!"

He pushed at Mike, wanting to embrace him but hitting him instead. "Beat it, cry-baby," he screamed, with all his love savage and fisted at his brother's back.

The whole family swept on before his violence. They reached the garage as a new series of shots began, again the sound as orderly and contained as barked commands, but much nearer, so loud that the air seemed to vibrate and fall with them upon the floor inside the leaning walls.

"Home!" Joe shouted, and he laughed so crazily that Betty and Mary began to cry, listening to him.

"Shut up," Tom said quietly, trying to catch his breath. He took Cathy into his arms and soothed her.

"O.K.," he said, close to her stunned white face. "Now O.K., Cathy. Little girl. You go to sleep. We're going to eat soon — soon as you wake up in the morning. Right now you go to sleep."

She lay in his arms, shivering. His chest hurt when he breathed,

and he felt the garage wheeling around him like dark, ice-flecked wings, but he was able to stroke Cathy's hair, watch the others to see if they were all right. The softer, obscuring night within these walls lay all about, painting the family into fragile faces, eyes of wistfulness and love.

"O.K.," Tom told them. "We're not going to be hungry now. Bread. Maybe some milk, some sausage. See, we can do it whenever we have to eat. It was easy, wasn't it? We didn't hurt anybody, did we? She'll get up and go home. She's got other money. All the others have money."

No one answered him, not even Mike. He felt lonely, too old to cry. "Listen," he said, as quietly as before, "families have to take care of themselves. We just have to remember that. Nobody's going to break up our family. Hear me?"

The shadowy, delicate heads nodded. Looking down, he saw that Cathy was asleep.

"Here, Mary," he said, and put Cathy into her arms.

Then he said, like making them a promise, "I'll go to the market tomorrow. Real early. I'll buy a little bit at one place, a little at some other. They won't get me, or ask any questions about money."

Again he felt that stark loneliness as no one answered, but he said casually, "They don't care who's buying, anyway. I was watching today. They take anybody's money. What do they care?"

He lay down, and each moved closer to him as they listened to the shooting. He made sure Cathy was comfortable as she lay in the crook of Mary's arm, then he turned on his side and listened to the world.

A fainter sound joined the gun sound, grew louder until they all recognized it as marching; then they could hear the rasping voices of command, too. These were the usual noises of night, taking them mechanically into the widening circles where they drifted toward sleep.

Mike stirred for an instant. "Tom, wake me up," he muttered. "When you go to market."

"Yeah," Tom said softly. "And then we'll eat."

The circles in which they drifted widened and merged, and Tom heard all of them breathing slowly, regularly. As he watched over them, his loneliness lost its aching keenness. He knew all of them safe, together, and he knew that was the only important thing to remember. His eyes closed, and he felt quiet and covered by the feeling of togetherness.

The family slept.

H. R. HAYS:

A Whaling Print

Shielded in size,
The whale spouts ether,
Billowing immensities;
His buttoned eye
Jocose with mortal calm.
High on the sea's back,
He rides the planet's course,
Brine of the tide's tears
Foams at his flukes—
Passage beyond the Horn,
Passage beyond the mind,
Left leaner for this vision
Of ragged waves awash
In the green wind . . .

But we,
in the grey hull of silence,
Soothed, drugged, devoured,
Stroke on stroke
Pursue till caught,
Imprisoned in the scene,
The spidered boats crawling,
Taut line hitched—never to attain—
Deathlessly straining.

The Zulu

The Zulu about to become
A magician
Grows ill.

His body is muddy,
He sneezes,
He becomes a house of dreams.

He sheds tears.
He awakes at night and sings.

The village wakes
And sings with him.

He leaps about the house
Like a frog,
He goes leaping and singing,
Shaking like a reed,
Dripping sweat.

This holy madman
(Able to find lost objects
And foretell the future)
Is loved.
They feed him cattle.

Possessed, possessed,
Rich poet—a thinner prophet
Can only envy
The sacred and practical disease
And the horned laurels!

According to the Chronicler

The Inca
Exacted tribute
Only in labor.

Of the very poor
He demanded
From time to time
A small caneful
Of lice.

He did this
So that no one
Would be exempt
From service to the state.

And also
So that the poor
Should be forced
To delouse themselves.

The church that came after
Was more generous,
Believing that lice and dirt
Would mortify the flesh
And free the spirit.

Today the little lice,
Least of God's creatures,
Sing te deum
In multiple chorale.

Now
All the Quechua
Are spiritually free.

C. ROLAND WAGNER

The Idea of Nothingness in Wallace Stevens

". . . perfected consciousness differs as little as could be wished from nothingness." — Valéry

Wallace Stevens uses the terms "nothing" and "nothingness" to define the whole range of moral and spiritual life. The terms help both to lay out the moral road to spiritual liberation and to specify the nature of such liberation. In the poetry of these apparently lifeless words we can hear the personal accent of Stevens' total theoretic vision and, conversely, it is through spiritual vision and theoretic moral power themselves that nothingness can be understood.

The idea of nothingness is more frequently linked in Stevens' poetry with the final spiritual goal than with the moral means. Stevens disassociates himself from those who, under whatever pious name, make the existent flux the ultimate end for man. Darkness as a goal, as the infra-rational extinction of a D. H. Lawrence, is not the nothingness of which he speaks. His nothingness is the *upward,* rather than the *downward alien,* the "supreme poetic idea" of God as ideal rather than as the source of that ideal in nature; it signifies fulfillment and extinction through and beyond the human rather than beneath it. In this respect Stevens is the Platonist in opposition to the Bergsonian. Thus Bergson finds in the Platonic theory of mind an undesirable movement towards nothingness. In *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* he condemns the theory because it defines mind (and even soul) simply by the negations of matter: "It appears to represent the acme of spirituality, just because it goes to the end of something. But this something is only negation. There is nothing to be extracted from nothingness . . ." Precisely, Stevens might well declare, taking the statement in a considerably more favorable light; for it opens the way to his Platonic — even Plotinian — use of the idea of nothingness.

In all of his poetry the luminous air and the uncorrupted blue span of heaven are symbols for the infinite possibilities of the imagination: they make up the precious and pure transparent medium through which appearances might be equally given to the spirit. In a general sense, then (we shall come to specific meanings in a moment), nothing-

ness is that vital medium considered as an *absolute*. Nothingness for Stevens is primarily associated (although never identified) with a consummate and immaculate spirit or consciousness — blank, inhuman, amoral. Such unconditional characteristics are usually anathema to humanists — and rightly so, for absolute spirit is a work of the devil: Wallace Stevens does not speak to timid humanists who fail to see the proper issue of their humanism. He speaks to those who know the "prolongations of the human." But he is aware of the dangers of prolonging the human to the point of distortion. He knows that absolute spirit must be joined to a fertile, natural reality in order for both to bear fruit in human nature. To join them *directly,* however, is not possible because reality is as inhuman as the spirit. Between the two there must be an appeaser, a human bridge, to connect the more-than-human to the less-than-human. This is the bridge of morality, of ideals, of relevant imagination. This is the "central poem." Through it the spirit and reality are moralized, for the inhuman spirit is brought down and inhuman reality is raised up, both to the level of humanity — which is itself thereby enhanced.

This brings us to the idea of nothingness (in its less dominant role in Stevens' poetry) as a focus of the moral life. In this sense, nothingness becomes the mediator between pure spirit and naked reality. It comprehends at once the religious notion of total depletion for the sake of perfect fulfillment and the sceptical, metaphysical notion of reality as utterly purposeless and without structural value. It emphasizes the necessity for stripping away all comforting illusions so as to strengthen the self for the contemplation of the *final* illusion of truth.

But the poems will give substance to these generalities, and I turn immediately to them after listing in a more orderly and detailed fashion the various possible meanings of nothingness:

(1) Blank spirit is open to all possible objects, being characterized by absolutely nothing but light.

(2) A perfected spirit approaches to nothing; the impossible limit of ultimate contemplation or absolute peace is nothingness.

(3) The self regards itself as nothing during a supreme moment of otherness; life is turned into the pure act of awareness.

(4) Utter disillusionment reduces all traditional and conventional moralities to nothing; a condition of "poverty" — poverty of religious beliefs — is accepted as the new morality.

(5) The objects of spirit or imagination are immaterial, airy noth-

ings having positive being but not existence; they are essences, nothing that need exist, yet everything that is possible.

(6) Life and reality are sacraments for the spirit; both are at once everything and nothing.

In accordance with the first meaning, the *fact* of spirit is defined in terms of nothingness (and the imagery linked to nothingness) in the poem entitled "Less and Less Human, O Savage Spirit." Some of the other meanings, especially the second, are involved here, but not centrally:

> If there must be a god in the house, must be,
> Saying things in the rooms and on the stair,
>
> Let him move as the sunlight moves on the floor,
> Or moonlight, silently, as Plato's ghost
>
> Or Aristotle's skeleton. Let him hang out
> His stars on the wall. He must dwell quietly.
>
> He must be incapable of speaking, closed,
> As those are: as light, for all its motion, is;
>
> As color, even the closest to us, is;
> As shapes, though they portend us, are.
>
> It is the human that is the alien,
> The human that has no cousin in the moon.
>
> It is the human that demands his speech
> From beasts or from the incommunicable mass.
>
> If there must be a god in the house, let him be one
> That will not hear us when we speak: a coolness,
>
> A vermilioned nothingness, any stick of the mass
> Of which we are too distantly a part.
>
> (*Transport to Summer,* 55)

Several critics have taken "spirit" (or "god") to refer to the "spirit of things"; they take it to be a new formulation which renders the ground of reality a substitute for the old anthropomorphic deity. It seems to me, however, that what is being defined here is spirit as pure consciousness or as a new kind of god of the imagination, and that, to heighten the description of its alien nature, Stevens is employing some of the symbols which he customarily associates with reality.

This results in an extremely ambiguous relation between spirit and reality as we move constantly from one to the other. The ambiguity springs from the kinship of the inhuman spirit to inhuman reality, a kinship of indifference to human desires. To live in the spirit, we are told, is to transcend morality in the way that light, color and shapes transcend it when they are considered under the form of eternity. Shapes are *signs* of human will but they can and *must* be seen as pure shape, abstract design. As we have learned from modern nonrepresentational painting, and as we should have learned from the entire history of art, the *ultimate* — whether moral or speculative — must be turned into the *immediate* in order to be turned into a pleasure for the spirit.

But bare reality, in its own way, also transcends morality; it is also indifferent to human desire. Thus the expression, "less and less human," not only describes the more-than-human quality of pure spirit, but also the less-than-human quality of bare reality. And the words, "a coolness, a vermilioned nothingness," embody the same extremes. Various shades of red are generally used in Stevens' work as symbols for the non-human source of power and passion in the world; so that the spirit's true nature as the "beast of light" is strongly comprehended when the poet's imagination suffuses it with the fiery hue of vermilion. (This is even more obvious in "The Glass of Water": "Light / Is the lion that comes down to drink. . . . Ruddy are his eyes and ruddy are his claws / When light comes down to wet his frothy jaws.") The destructive inhumanity of redness, merging with the form of consciousness, turns them both into a fire without heat (cf. "Phospher Reading by His Own Light") and a "coolness," detached and clear, which flashes forth as the contemplative nothingness of savage spirit.

And it is this very quality of nothingness that best reveals the nature of spirit. In one of his essays[1] Stevens tells us (after denying that nobility is merely "an artifice that the mind has added to human nature") that "The mind has added nothing to human nature." Even without pointing up the ambiguity in the word "nothing," it is evident that Stevens is here viewing the mind epiphenomenally, as a materialist. The mind is an existent which brings nothing else into existence, having come to be, and being sustained wholly, by forces that precede it. The source of all ideals is in humanity, and they are ordered and expressed, if at all, *through* the mind. But it

[1] "The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words," in *The Language of Poetry*, ed. by A. Tate, Princeton, 1942, p. 125.

is not the mind that is the active, causal agent of order. It is matter, as organized in human nature, that orders ideals through the immaterial and transcendental nothingness of the mind.

But the mind is related to nothingness in many other ways. A section of the poem entitled "The Owl in the Sarcophagus" illustrates our second meaning of nothingness by representing the ultimate *state* of spirit. The whole poem studies the interweavings of the three final forms of "the mythology of modern death." The form of "peace" (the ultimate ideal of spirit) is located between the form of "sleep" (the ultimate ideal of human desire) and the form of the earthly mother (the flux as the creative fount). "Peace" results from the perfect synthesis of the other two forms:

> There peace, the godolphin and fellow, estranged, estranged,
> Hewn in their middle as the beam of leaves,
> The prince of shither-shade and tinsel lights,
>
> Stood flourishing the world. The brilliant height
> And hollow of him by its brilliance calmed,
> Its brightness burned the way good solace seethes.
>
> This was peace after death, the brother of sleep,
> The inhuman brother so much like, so near,
> Yet vested in a foreign absolute,
>
> Adorned with cryptic stones and sliding shines,
> An immaculate personage in nothingness,
> With the whole spirit sparkling in its cloth. . .
> (*Auroras of Autumn*, 49)

Peace is that final state of complete liberation in which the spirit exercises in full its essentially contemplative nature. The Godolphin is one of the three original Eastern horses that are said to have sired all of the present British and American thoroughbreds. The "godolphin"[2] in the text borrows its meaning from the horse's name.

[2] The components of the word godolphin — god and dolphin — hint at another possible meaning. The word dolphin suggests its French cognate *dauphin* (both derive from the Latin *delphinus)*. The Dauphin, as the reader knows, was the title of the eldest French prince. Thus in Stevens' text the form of "peace" may be "god" and his prince of peace (Jesus) and, at the same time, "god" and his prince of darkness (Lucifer). (Lucifer, of course, is the brightest angel of light who becomes the prince of darkness.) The godolphin, therefore, is the prince of both winter and summer. In this connection, Kenneth Burke's interpretation of Yeats' line, "That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea," is interesting. In discussing the plastic quality of words in poetry in a lecture, Burke suggested that this line could easily become, if only for a moment, "That *devil*-torn, that *god*-tormented sea."

Absolute spiritual peace, we may say, therefore, is a "fellow" to every transient movement of fruition, yet in itself is separate and "estranged," like its particular manifestations to an eternal form and its pure offspring to the original Godolphin. Peace is the "height" of the imaginative life, "hewn" centrally between the form of the flux and the form of sleep, whether in wintry detachment or in the transformation of the real, whether in the underworld or in the brighter world of reason. He is a "peace after death" because he grows out of the imperfectibility of human nature and because the ideal suggested by the flux is a state beyond possibility, yet conditioning every human possibility by its divine being. It would be death to achieve this peace. It is death to ignore it. Peace is the "inhuman brother" of the human desire for composure but is himself beyond composure, being a peace not of this world felt in a moment of composure in this world. He is "vested in a foreign absolute" which transcends morality, yet without which morality is a contrivance for the perpetuation of dust. He is an "immaculate" and "hollow" personage as near to nothingness as it is possible to be. Peace is what the spirit would feel were it entirely free, and *does* partly feel in its limited freedom — an "impossible possible" peace, an absolute death in life.

A similar personification of the perfect state of spirit is found in "Chocorua to Its Neighbor" where Chocorua, the natural self, speaks of his spiritual "neighbor" as a "human thing," an "eminence, / But of nothing," a "bare brother" who "rose because men wanted him to be," and who rests on Chocorua, thinking in his "snow." The images Stevens uses to describe this sublime "neighbor" converge on nothingness:

> He was a shell of dark blue glass, or ice,
> Or air collected in a deep essay,
> Or light embodied, or almost, a flash
> On more than muscular shoulders, arms and chest,
> Blue's last transparence as it turned to black. . .
> (*Transport,* 17)

Blue glass, ice, air, light: all of these images attempt, yet must fail, to specify the nature of purity, for purity transcends pale image and mere metaphor.

Again, a passage from "The Auroras of Autumn" (section VIII) elucidates in a different vein the same notion of spiritual purity. Overtones of several other connotations of nothingness (specifically nos. 3, 4 and 6) may be noted here:

choly, but these are always transformed into the eternity of moral necessity. In a poem such as "In a Bad Time," the protagonist undeviatingly accepts "the order of the northern sky" and "cold's glacial beauty" as the widest and deepest philosophic manner of sensing reality. He accepts his "sense of the world" with true piety even though it has come to him in this contingent time and place, and "without understanding." All the forms of traditional nobility, including the nobility of religion itself, are inappropriate to our unresponsive, flat reality. It is better to confront this circumstance steadfastly, to expand it into a total, unembellished acceptance of the truth, than to falsify it with the wayward imagination:

> Sordid Melpomene, why strut bare boards,
> Without scenery or lights, in the theatre's bricks,
> Dressed high in heliotrope's inconstant hue,
>
> The muse of misery? Speak loftier lines.
> Cry out, "I am the purple muse." Make sure
> The audience beholds you, not your gown.
> (*Auroras,* 34)

To behold Melpomene, not her gown, is simply to behold the tragedy of existence without any fanciful additions of the imagination. The "loftier lines" will speak the fact that all imaginings are mere appearance. If Melpomene be taken as a symbol of imagination, on the other hand, then the "loftier lines" will express the fact that imagination in our time must cease to be deceived by its own imaginings and learn to know its fictive status. It must make a new nobility of the lack of nobility. In either case the true imagination must face the true reality and make of this noble clarity the beginning of wisdom.

Wisdom is attained when the truths of winter and of nothingness become the actual basis for a positive vision of reality. We have seen this expressed in one way in "The Snow Man" where contemplation supervenes on poverty. It is expressed in another way by the symbolism of the idea of winter in the midst of summer. In the "Examination of the Hero in a Time of War" (VI), for example, Stevens conceives the possibility of the fictive hero: "In a civiler manner, / Devise, devise, and make him of winter's / Iciest core, a north star, central / In our oblivion, of summer's / Imagination, the golden rescue. . . " By using the "inhalations of original cold" to help "search" the springtime and summer of reality, the central fiction maintains its indispensable connection with the central truth. The imagination

of summer is curbed in its desire to give itself promiscuously to all its creations by the austere imagination of winter.

But what are the *objects* of spirit after it has gone through the discipline of winter and has achieved wisdom? According to our fifth meaning of nothingness these objects are airy nothings or essences having positive being but no existence. The idea is given an abstract poetic body in "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven":

> Inescapable romance, inescapable choice
> Of dreams, disillusion as the last illusion,
> Reality as a thing seen by the mind,
>
> Not that which is but that which is apprehended. . .
> (*Auroras,* 118)

As in the spiritual detachment from, and final acceptance of, reality as "nothing" by the "snow man," the poet sees that ultimate acceptance is simply ultimate illusion. It is the disillusion which is the "last illusion" of a mind that must have illusions to live by and must have the plain truth. Disillusion is itself an ordering principle, or the beginning of one, because it is the basis for integrity, but it can only be a *false* illusion if it is thought that the truth which we arrive at is the literal truth of reality. We can never break through the imagination and plunge nakedly into ultimate reality. To get at the truth, we must use the imagination to transcend itself symbolically, but must recognize that fulfillment only comes within the circle of the imagination when symbolic truth *satisfies.* This is the explanation of the transition from the third to the fourth line in the above quotation: reality is seen truthfully yet only in the mind.[3]

A reality that has been so transformed by nothingness, a reality that has been lifted up into the status of a spectacle, becomes transparent to the hawk's eye of spirit. Concrete reality, of course, remains the same during the process, but the picture we have of it in the mind is a complex of essences irrelevant to existence. These essences, although they are admittedly no-*thing,* do have the indubitable character which they are apprehended as having. Technically, they have being but not existence. Reality continues to exist but the imagined reality in the mind is . . . nothing.

---

[3] An opposite yet supplementary meaning to the line, "Not that which is but that which is apprehended," may be that reality, that which in its savage nakedness is *feared* (i.e. apprehended), is distinct from that which is presented in appearance. Also, reality as a thing *seized* and *possessed* by the contemplating mind is distinguishable from its mere passive presentation in appearance.

If we join the morality of "The Snow Man" and "In a Bad Time" to the passage we are considering, we can expand the meaning of "Disillusion as the last illusion" in terms of all of Stevens' philosophic poetry. For this emancipated poet all literal beliefs are gone except the supreme need for belief. *Nothing is left of value save the value of imagination itself.* Reality, as always, is everlastingly present and obsessively real, but gone is the motion and the spirit that rolls through all things *in* reality. All real values of existence become unreal nothings of the imagination — which, assuming that *something* exists, is another way of saying that irrational reality is the ground for those nothings. Any momentary harmony from which the imagination profits is a material harmony within reality uttered through the imagination.

To discover an order, to achieve a central synthesis which raises life above itself is thus an act of grace on the part of reality. Nothing is the ground of this irrational fact save the fact itself, and the fact terminates in nothing save the "illustrious nothing" itself. "To discover an order as of / A season, to discover summer and know it, / discover winter and know it well, to find, / Not to impose, not to have reasoned at all, / Out of nothing to have come on major weather. . ." Out of irrational reality and out of disenchantment to have come on the rational enchantment by which we must live. . . Out of the vital love of real things to have learned the disciplined love of fictive things. . . Out of the love of the ancient mother, the source of life and inspiration, to have come on the "vivid transparence" that is peace. . . We are foolish to look for salvation in another sphere. "We seek / Nothing beyond reality." Nothing is healthier than to return to the mother for sustenance and renewal. Yet this healthy sustenance and necessary renewal are in vain if they do not issue in a nothing beyond health and beyond the mother, a quite useless nothing, like a silver mirror that has slipped in to hallow existence and make it shine.

> . . . We seek
> Nothing beyond reality. Within it,
>
> Everything, the spirit's alchemicana
> Included, the spirit that goes roundabout
> And through included, not merely the visible,
>
> The solid, but the movable, the moment,
> The coming on of feasts and the habits of saints,
> The pattern of the heavens and high, night air.
> (*Auroras,* 126-127)

RICHARD EBERHART:

The Stevens Prose

WALLACE STEVENS: *The Necessary Angel. Essays on Reality and the Imagination.* Knopf.

The late appearance of this first volume of prose by Wallace Stevens — its appearance, in fact, in his seventy-second year — is a datum of elegance and of restraint. It is a grand manner. These ideas have been germinating a long time, although the essays as delivered or published are only about ten years old.

The striking thing about the book is the belief that it could be put off so long. That is elegant. The prose of Stevens is secondary to his poetry. Stevens would serve us as well as poet, perhaps, without this work. It is an adumbration. I do not mean that we are not richer for having it; we are richer, but it does not change the poetry. It would have changed the poetry for some readers had the prose rationale appeared twenty years ago. It would have cast lights, cast nets, and caught realities else spun in air. But that would have been too easy. We have had the long unfolding of the poetry and now follows the rationale. This is the restraint.

In the articulation of Stevens' poetry within the mind time is a vital element. His subtleties have been diffident of communication, but tenacious and of dense sensuous complexity when they have magnetized the mind and have held it, in a fascinated imbalance, for years. But in a few hours we can master the whole content of this book. It is thus a strange thing itself, that so much well-written prose can be savored so readily.

I would advise the subtlest or abstrusest lovers of the poetry not to read it. This is to compliment the verse, not to detract from the prose. Students and the uninitiated have here a hornbook. And oldsters, impregnated with the canon, can, indeed, bear the virtue of much flashing reason.

Once we are in it we are in a kind of poetry itself, a poetry of rational notions systematically expressed. I may protest too much for there is a massive simplicity in the easy progression from one idea to the next. Maybe it is a disappointment and that one confects a fiction of the possibilities of a poetry within the prose when the poetry is in the mind.

"It is one of the peculiarities of the imagination that it is always at the end of an era. What happens is that it is always attaching itself to a new reality, and adhering to it. It is not that there is a new imagination but that there is a new reality. The pressure of reality may, of course, be less than the general pressure that I have described. It exists for individuals according to the circumstances of their lives or according to the characteristics of their minds. To sum up, the pressure of reality is, I think . . . ." This is an example of the direct progression of ideas, of the simplicity and clarity of the diction.

"The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words" has a vision of Verrocchio's statue of Bartolommeo Colleoni that is persuasive. We are reminded that it is possible for Stevens to write an essay with this title; it would not be likely in a younger writer, in one who was young, say, in the late twenties. The

notion of nobility in man was fractured by his violent ability to stultify his vision, from the first World War through the Second. Stevens is historically embedded in ideas growing out of the nineteenth century.

A possible poet, realizing the violence of our times, will consider that "his own measure as a poet, in spite of all the passions of all the lovers of the truth, is the measure of his power to abstract himself, and to withdraw with him into his abstraction the reality on which the lovers of the truth insist. He must be able to abstract himself and also to abstract reality, which he does by placing it in his imagination. He knows perfectly that he cannot be too a noble rider, that he cannot rise up loftily in helmet and armor on a horse of imposing bronze."

Prose rather than evading reality tends to engage it. Stevens here speaks out in a way that he does not in his poetry; the nature of the medium presses him to logical confessionals. We have a good many plain statements and, as might be expected, some defections of logic. He engages the general situation of the times, without let. While he protests that of sociological or political obligation the poet "has none," he wavers back and forth as if almost afraid to conclude the way his engaged perceptions go. It is as if he would not have them go to this plain statement: "His role, in short, is to help people to live their lives." For just previously to the question "What is his function?" he has said: "Certainly it is not to lead people out of the confusion in which they find themselves." And just afterwards he has said, "There is not a poet whom we prize living today that does not address himself to an elite." He can hardly have his poet without sociological or political obligation if he is to help people to live their lives, yet he affects to have it both ways. But no, the poet helps by the supreme fictions that he makes, so that I suspect that Stevens is not willing to divorce the sound of words from the nobility of Colleoni after all. This indecision and lack of resolution, the reading between the lines, brings me back to the delight of a kind of poetry in the prose, the overtones and nuances of the thought. "Yet the imagination gives to everything that it touches a peculiarity, and it seems to me that peculiarity of the imagination is nobility, of which there are many degrees." He speaks of "that nobility which is our spiritual height and depth." Again, "There is no element more conspicuously absent from contemporary poetry than nobility. There is no element that poets have sought after, more curiously and more piously, certain of its obscure existence."

There is no evasion in this essay: it grapples thoroughly with its problem. The essay inhabits a double defense of the poet as exquisite abstracter of and coper with violent reality. If it is not all logic-tight, so much the better for it. The sincerity of the attack on the problem is not in question. Nobility is a force. It is commendable that Stevens embodies it in ideas as well as in acts.

He has resolved the piece as follows. "The mind has added nothing to human nature. It is a violence from within that protects us from a violence without. It is the imagination pressing back against the pressure of reality. It seems, in the last analysis, to have something to do with our self-preservation; and that, no doubt, is why the expression of it, the sound of its words, helps us to live our lives." Which abstracts, after all, the sociological and the political considerations from the view. We are left with an apparently discreet prose statement of what occurs, yet there is something evasive about it, recalcitrant to the simple grip it would take on us, so that we flounder about somewhat help-

lessly wondering how our lives are helped, for nothing is proved about this by the prose, despite the beautiful machinery of the presentation, and we leave this essay with poetic divinations got between the lines, our own shadowy evocations and turbulent presentiments: Stevens' prose has not been able to outwit his poetry or soothe us into a logical one-to-one acceptance of what it says. It is imaginative prose and of poetical prose, if it is poetical, it is the most prosaic poetical prose, but it is indubitably poetical and thus a harsh lasher of absolutes, a cunning invader of the speculative, and a tempter of the irrational.

"The Figure of the Youth and Virile Poet" advances the argument that poetry may be superior to philosophy for "if the end of the philosopher is despair, the end of the poet is fulfillment." These propositions are tenderly approached; it is seen that the postulates might be other so that other commitments would follow. His writing is intelligently conditional. It is often that if so and so should be true then such and such might follow, but if it were not quite so, or if there were thus and thus other possibilities then it might be that this or that could be the result. Which is not to parody the method but to indicate the basic poetic ramifying possibilities interlaced with the central notions. He says that "if the philosopher comes to nothing because he fails, the poet may come to nothing because he succeeds. The philosopher fails to discover. Suppose the poet discovered and had the power thereafter at will and by intelligence to reconstruct us by his transformations. He would also have the power to destroy us."

So we advance to the authority of the personality of the poet by way of banality in the first clause: "There can be no poetry without the personality of the poet, and that, quite simply, is why the definition of poetry has not been found and why, in short, there is none." There follows, on p. 51, a wonderful sentence longer than half the page about the idea of God as poetic, ending after jubilant phrases in a clause like a line of his poetry where we see the God-establishing poet "still in the ecstasy of the poem that completely accomplished his purpose" "uttering the hymns of joy that followed his creation."

The next step is that the creative moments are victorious over the incredible so that "poetic truth is an agreement with reality," the poet having to get rid of the hieratic, who "must move constantly in the direction of the credible. He must create his unreal out of what is real." This last turns it around again, for we thought the poet was creating reality yet now he is making his fiction from reality. The poet ceases to be a metaphysician, "standing in the radiant and productive atmosphere" and by "an incandescence of the intelligence" triumphs over the incredible.

Perhaps, contrary to my thesis, we learn more from Stevens in these prose idéas than in the poetry itself. Who would have felt a kinship between Stevens and Wordsworth? When we read the following sentence we equate it as we may with the lightening of the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world: "Can we suppose for a moment that he will be content merely to make notes, merely to copy Katahdin, when, with his sense of the heaviness of the world, he feels his own power to lift, or to help to lift, that heaviness away?" Stevens is also talking about serene and blessed moods.

In "Three Academic Pieces" we find the theory of resemblances. There is nothing remarkably new in this. It comes out of Baudelaire and Rimbaud. On pp. 76-77 students will wish to ponder some remarkable suggestions on

the after life. As for resemblances, "The brilliance of earth is the brilliance of every paradise," which might be a line of his verse.

He writes discerningly "About One of Marianne Moore's Poems," pointing out her method, her excellence, and her limitations.

The two chapters "Effects of Analogy" and "Imagination as Value" are as fascinating as the foregoing chapters, but will not be treated here. The former deals with the poet's "sense of the world," the latter with the abstracting powers of the mind. The imagination is the power that enables us to see "the opposite of chaos in chaos." The book closes on "The Relations Between Poetry and Painting," which Stevens sees as close and upon which he provides interesting logical parallels and insights.

In retrospect, it is possible that in the future these essays will be required reading for the fullest understanding of the poetry; they are a noble monument of highly serious considerations to that other noble monument of his poetry.

ARTHUR GREGOR:

The New Poetry of Horace Gregory

HORACE GREGORY: *Selected Poems.* The Viking Press.

> Tell me my riddle:
> I am not a mirage, but a being in flesh
> Born of a sea that has neither
> Waves nor shore, nor moon, nor star
> ("The Beggar on the Beach")

This mystery of man, this mystery of life, this riddle both primitive and refined, is central to neither place nor time. It is central only to itself, exists everywhere in everything, an essence that vibrates although devoid of substance, a music without sound, a silence that speaks; a light, a voice heard only by those who are themselves in tune with its inaudible rhythm, seen only by those free enough to be near it.

> . . . she is wandering
> Artemis who endures beyond life, she is
> The light behind a cloud . . .
> ("The Night-Walker")

The mystery is everywhere. A universal though unworded dogma relating to everything, it exists in everything, unites all things by being alive in each separate thing, and so unifies what it divides. It is an awareness that we cannot escape. When it seems to be forgotten or proven not worth contemplating by one man-imposed order or another, one man-made device or another, it makes itself felt when least expected and through the most subtle references. Since it does not blare nor proclaim itself in bright colors of paper or cloth, nor even speak audibly, since it possesses the assurance of existence, since it *is*

> Sleepless, she [Artemis] warns and charms,
> Sees the new age fallen out of the old,
> New ruins where elder cities stood. Indifferent
> Is she to these; she has come to warn us

That her pale life, her sterile mountains
Have outlived wars . . .
("The Night-Walker")

. . . it is obvious to those who see it, but eludes those who for a moment, perhaps even a lifetime, are blinded away from it by one thing or another; but as it is everywhere and in everything, it cannot be forgotten, it must make itself felt, and does.

— How still, how very still the air is
As though it waited, is still waiting
For the clock to strike. Did you see that shadow
Fall behind the clock, behind the white face
Of the dial?
("The Unwilling Guest: An Urban Dialogue")

And so the opera glass in "Opera, Opera!" deceives man in the use to which he has put it. Meant to magnify, it magnifies, since that is its function, — but does not magnify things as man's fancy would have them be; a thing of nature, although man-devised, the lens remains true to its essence, and magnifies things only as they are. The opera glass reveals the mystery behind the painted scene, the made-up world.

It had been discovered that lenses
Of opera glasses could not be controlled
. . . . .
. . . jewelers called them "a scientific work of art"
. . . . . but when one touched them
The hand became unsteady, and the sight
(If one saw anything at all) became
Unnaturally clear.

This mystery constitutes an even, timeless truth. If we know how to yield to it, which, as one feels from these poems, is wise, since it is as changeless as the silence behind the motion of the sea, if we know how to accept without questioning it, thereby challenging it, and it cannot be challenged, — if we learn to live in this reality, we gain entrance into a realm of infinite surprises, which is what Mr. Gregory shows us. Nothing is closed to us if we dare to enter, nothing kept from us if we dare to listen and hear. So that what the romantic aspires to but never achieves outside his world of imagination is attained by him who conquers reality by accepting it. He does not need to create this world of fancy, it has been created for him; and far more luxurious it is, and far more imaginative, and far more lurid and far more beautiful, than the private, unreal world made up within the limits of man's mind. Odysseus knows he has lost his sailors, lost those who were to support him on his private journey when he comes upon the island where nature rules voluptuously.

That island is a place
Famous for the noises of its waves,
Bird-calls, cave-echoes, storms of ancient sky
Which are transmuted into the sound
Of girlish voices, a spell that entrances
The lonely man (God help him) lost at sea.
[and later]
It was then I knew
That all my men would leave me . . .

. . . . . .
It was useless to threaten them
With chains and galleys and the loss of home.
They were free of the lot of those who die in irons.
("A Temptation of Odysseus")

To direct one's senses to the voices that whisper of this essence of life, is to do away then with the torture of man who like a cripple cannot reach for all his height; it is to know fulfillment, and to endure suffering.

Yet over Hades something opens like a sky;
Perhaps in darkness we are closer to the sun —
("Homage to Circe")

Flesh dies, cities fall, new cities rise, only this essence within life, this mystery, endures —

I am what you seek,
And all you need to know.
("Venus and the Lute-Player")

And so does the poet's voice concerned with it. This same essence translated into a work of art endures. Who can destroy a work which, man-made though it is, is beyond destruction? The statue may break, the books be lost, but the voice within the work remains if the poet's concern, as the concern of Krishna to Arjuna on the battlefield, is with the deepest force in life itself: the indestructible.

As I heard the voice, I saw the dark face vanish,
Yet I knew its presence in the darker air,
The hand-clasped book, the cloak, the bough, the laurel:
Even though earth fail us and street and city gone,
We shall know that figure and its fiery star
Rising behind the ceaseless sun and moon.
("Statue in the Square")

Although this mystery does not follow us, we run from it. Although it shows not the least concern for us, goes on, exists, *is, is* in a manner that shows no concern whether we exist or not, we are constantly concerned with it, although we think we have forgotten it, have escaped it by living automatically in the machine-order of contemporary living, — we are deeply troubled by it, for we are always running from it in an endeavor to spite it —, we cannot bear indifference. And so we feel pursued by the very thing which does not pursue us at all. Feeling pursued becomes a fancy, a way of escaping the inescapable, a wishful thinking, an explanation of something that cannot be explained. And Horace Gregory does not explain, conceals what is concealed to us in life, but shows us subtly, silently, always in the best of taste, the richness, the beauty in the mystery of that which cannot be explained.

When the woman left us, one could not have known
That two weeks later
She would actually disappear,
Her phone disconnected, the top-flight suite for rent,
That perhaps the musicians had returned,
Even in the city.
One could not prove that they had followed her.
("The Woman Who Disapproved of Music at the Bar")

In every one of these new poems included in Mr. Gregory's new book, this sense of mystery prevails. One could go through every one and attempt to solve it much as one solves a riddle. But that would be folly, as these poems concern themselves with the riddle that cannot be solved. These poems offer a rich experience, each poem being an experience in itself, each showing a different segment of life, a different world, where all parts, all references, all images whole in themselves, serve to make up a larger whole, function toward each other, incongruous as they may seem, and sharp in contrast. Alexandria and Pharos are related to the modern city; the Pillar of Cestius is part of a whole together with references to *Roméo et Juliette,* Three Spaniards, a Welch Albino and a Levantine Greek; a Hebrew Maiden and a Naked Man are parts of a whole in the properties of the Western Theatre. Here are contrasts which sharpen the vision, differences which strengthen the particular quality of each part and which, because of their quality of difference, unite. It is a rich world, this new poetry of Horace Gregory, a quiet, mysterious world, not limited by dogma, nor by the poet's subjective character traits, but open to a standard that eliminates any lesser standard, based on a truth where truth loses all predilection, a state of "things being what they are," a profoundly felt sense of reality. And so the area within which Mr. Gregory works is limitless, the possibilities of fusion, of feelings shaping, of things happening, if one's mind is freed of personal restrictions, equally unlimited. For all things are related by the indestructible essence that combines them, and all things function toward each other, as each plane of a jewel functions toward all planes and each single plane. Here then is a poet who is working toward a powerful poetics. Having discarded the limited freedom of "poetic license," Horace Gregory has found his way to the essence in things that exist outside of himself in the real world that surrounds him, and discovered a freedom that is limited not by himself but by the certainties within the nature of things, but is unlimited as to new explorations and offers infinite surprises. No longer need they be created in the poet's mind, they are created for him. Here then is a poetics richer, more luxurious and more mysterious than that of the romantic, imagist, academic, or any other school. This approach cannot constitute a "school," for it is nothing trained or imagined. It is rare and excellent poetry about the mystery that *is.*

SUPERIOR PRINTING SERVICES . . .

CAN ONLY BE PRODUCED BY MODERN EQUIPMENT — SKILLED CRAFTSMEN AND A COMPLETE ASSORTMENT OF TYPE FACES —

These essential Elements are all Available for Publication and Commercial Printing at

FLANIGAN-PEARSON CO.

10-12 Chester Street

Phone 3994 Champaign, Ill.